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Reflections on en-teaching: Dewey, Heidegger and Lao Tzu

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**REFLECTIONS ON *EN*-TEACHING:
DEWEY, HEIDEGGER AND LAO TZU**

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in
The Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Practice

by

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Abstract

Reflecting on my past two unsettling journeys of teaching in China and America produces questions about the teaching of truth in chapter one. The question of truth as it relates to the teacher's role in the classroom raises not only issues of what and how we should teach, but challenges the very purpose of teaching. When I explored Martin Heidegger's phenomenological perspective on (un)truth for insights into taken-for-granted assumptions about education and the purposes of teaching and learning, I noticed a strong resonance between his notion of "clearing" and the essential spirit of Taoism, "the Tao of inaction." This led me to coin the word, "*en-teaching*" to express my idea of how teachers can teach through paradoxically non-teaching, without implying a binary opposition between teaching and *non-teaching*.

In reviewing selected literature critical of the "teaching-as-telling" in America and China, I suggest in chapter two that the traditional direct teaching of truth has been entrenched in the public school systems in both countries as not only a teaching method but an implicit educational culture. The essence of this "teaching-as-telling" in both countries is the same – the will to control.

What alternatives might there be to the method of teaching-as-telling? How can we teach otherwise? Or can we? Since I struggle with the question of truth related to teaching and this question "assumes the greatest urgency in Heidegger's thought" (Sallis, 20), chapter three focuses on Heidegger's complex explorations of (un)truth in clearings between brightness and darkness along with his concept of "let learn" through "always-being-in-the-world."

In chapter four, I go further to explore my notion of *en-teaching* based upon

Heidegger's thoughts of teaching and learning with insights from Lao Tzu and Dewey. In the last chapter, I try to not only reflect upon all previous chapters but respond to the practical question, "What does *en*-teaching mean to me as I face my class on Monday morning?"

Chapter One

Introduction: A Long Unsettling Journey into Teaching

A Long Difficult Journey of Teaching

This is a secret that most of my closest friends and mentor teachers do not know: Education never appeared among the major choices on my application form for universities and colleges before I entered into the major of education fourteen years ago. My biggest dream for future life when I graduated from high school was to become a tour guide travelling around the world. When applying to universities, I chose majors of different foreign languages such as French, German, Spanish and Japanese. (Un)fortunately, my scores on the university entrance examination were high enough to have me selected by East China Normal University (ECNU) and then *assigned* to the department of “Pedagogy.”¹ Although feeling deeply frustrated when I received the admission offer, I still accepted it; after all, this was the best normal university in the south of China. Two years later a critical incident happened that almost changed my life.

In my senior year in education at ECNU, I began my first real teaching experience: I was assigned to intern as a teacher of English in a fourth grade in one of the most renowned public elementary schools in Shanghai. At first I was very excited by this precious teaching opportunity and at the same time I felt quite confident, for I thought I had been well equipped with a great variety of pedagogical knowledge and skills through educational courses taken in curriculum, instruction, psychology, philosophy, and schooling. Once I entered the school, however, I found the real world I encountered was never the one I imagined. If I were asked at that time “What does it mean to teach in school?” after the three months teaching internship, I would say,

¹ Both top normal and military universities in China have first priorities to choose their undergraduate students unless students specify clearly on application forms that they do not want to attend either of these universities. Since those universities usually provide free tuitions and stable job offers, most high school graduates would not reject them.

In real school life, teaching means to methodically address every behavioral objective in your lesson plan before class and then try to accomplish all of them in class, one after another. Teaching means to discipline students to be good listeners, to attend to every word from the mouth of the teacher, and to push students to grasp all “essentials” required by curriculum developers. Teaching also includes orienting students to perform multiple irrelevant daily routines in school what must be finished on time not only for school board members but also for officials in local and general Education Commissions.

In short, teaching, in this frame, is a sophisticated set of technologies pertaining to so called “basics,” those most corresponding to high stakes testing, programming students’ minds in the quickest and most efficient way. In addition, teaching is so highly competitive that one’s career is arbitrarily ended if the good academic performance of students – demonstrated by their high test scores – cannot be guaranteed.

At the end of my teaching internship, I realized that I clearly did not possess the qualities that make a good teacher, or in some sense, a good jail guard. I could not look into my students’ eyes when announcing that all of today’s recesses were cancelled, due to the news that the class did not get one of the first three places in the grades of midterm exams. I could not feel natural requesting the PE or art teachers relinquish their classes for me to prepare the class for the coming English contest. I could not repeat hundreds of times in class “Listen! I need your absolute attention and silence to focus on this issue which will quite possibly appear on the tests.” I could not yell at students who gossiped in class or send them to stand in the garbage can in the corner of the classroom. I could not force students to stay in class after school to rewrite the English words they misspelled in homework or pop quizzes at least another fifty times. I could not help being afraid of the possibility that one day I would do all these things in my classroom without feeling any guilt.

I began to feel pessimistic and even desperate about my future teaching career: Could I survive in the real school life which looks so much like a huge absorbing black hole? It was at

that moment that I was determined to carry on my studies to graduate school. The reason was simple: according to the policies of public universities in China at that time, no student was allowed to change his or her major. After I graduated from “Pedagogy,” I would have only two choices: to become a school teacher or continue my studies to the graduate level. Without any hesitation, I rejected the former and chose the latter. I worked very hard in all course work after I came back to the university. Receiving the highest graduation GPA in the department exempted me from taking the entrance test for graduate school. Each year, each department allows one undergraduate student to be exempted from the entrance test. It is assumed this student would choose the graduate major in the same department. I became the exception in my department of Pedagogy, the only exception in the last twenty years.

Honestly, after my teaching internship experience, I was so frightened of a school teaching career that I tried to avoid any graduate study possibly relevant to my major. In my home university, “Pedagogy” and “Curriculum & Instruction” were the only two departments for education majors. Even though I was not clear what the department of “Curriculum & Instruction” was about, I chose it. When I was asked by the graduate advisor in the C&I department which major I wanted to choose between the two major fields of curriculum and instruction, I replied firmly, “No, not ‘instruction’ in any specific subject. Curriculum sounds fine to me.” I said to myself, “No, nothing directly related to teaching.” This is the whole story of how I chose my major of “curriculum theory.” Even now the chair of department of Pedagogy does not forgive my switching departments; since then, the department developed the policy that the undergraduate student who is exempted from graduate testing must continue in the graduate major in the same department.

Graduate study in curriculum theory in my home university was, in brief, a happy

experience for me. I was very satisfied with my life in the ivory tower: reading, writing and conversing with mentor professors and colleagues in the academic field. Before graduation, I refused job offers in schools and research institutes and finally found a position as editor with a famous educational publisher in Shanghai. Then another big change occurred in my life. I was recommended by my major professor to continue my graduate study in curriculum theory in the United States. For me, this meant a future career life as a university faculty in education. In my limited understanding, educational faculty research was much more important than teaching. Besides, I thought university teaching would be quite different from teaching in K-12 schools. I happily accepted the offer and began my adventure in the Ph.D. program in curriculum studies at Louisiana State University

The ensuing learning experience was a fresh and exciting one for me. At the end of my second year of study, however, I was informed that I *must* teach a sophomore course, “EDCI 2030: Teaching, School & Society,” to continue with my graduate assistantship. This big news shocked me in two ways: How could I teach such a course to a group of American students in their cultural context as a foreigner? I am not an English native speaker and, at the same time, I had a fear of teaching. In the night before teaching my first class, I turned and tossed in bed and could not fall asleep. The next morning, just before I left for the class, my current major professor came to my office to comfort me, “Jie, I’ll tell you a secret that my professor told me before my first formal presentation: just take all of your audiences as watermelons.” After the class, he came again to ask how I felt about the class, and I told him, “Dr. Doll, you forgot to tell me that all of my watermelons have eyes.” I spent a lot of time in preparing for teaching that class. Before the semester began, I talked to the instructor who used to teach that class for advice and borrowed her syllabus along with the texts she used. I wrote a lesson plan for each class that

were so detailed that I tried to take down every word I would say in class even including the jokes, and then I recited them time and time again. When I try to recall my first teaching that semester, my only comment is “a disaster.” Often, when I thought I had prepared enough content to teach the class for more than two hours, I finished all in thirty minutes and then did not know what to do to get through the next sixty minutes. The more I pursued a perfect teaching performance, the more mistakes I made in the classroom. In their evaluations, at the end of semester, the students criticized not only my English with Chinese accent, but also my teaching.

This was a huge blow to me. Six years before, I had failed in my first teaching experience in school and then chose to withdraw back to university life – I locked that unhappy experience into a black box and threw it in the corner of my memory to try to avoid touching it again in my future life. This time, though, I did not want to surrender so easily. Six years before, the teaching internship took just three months, but now it was the beginning of my teaching here. I had failed two times but did not want to fail again and again in my teaching career.

Critical Reflections on “Failures”

I dug out from the very bottom of my piles and piles of file archives the journals, reports, log sheets and other field artifacts I had kept from six years before and put them together, along with all of my teaching materials and students’ evaluations from that last semester. When I went back to reflect carefully on every critical moment and incident in both teaching situations, I gradually found many things I had not recognized or noticed before.

Before the first intern teaching in China, I took the teaching methods courses required for all student teachers in which the texts of Johann F. Herbart and Ralph W. Tyler dominated. Specifically, Herbart’s “Five Steps” from preparation, presentation, association, and

generalization to application and Tyler's Rationale from setting objectives, experiences, organization to evaluations became the "Ten Commandments" that we were to engrave into our minds and strictly follow step by step in preparing lesson plans and teaching classes.

At the beginning of my first teaching experience, I completely followed the timeline of the teaching plan handed over to me from my mentor teacher, the real English teacher of that class. I carefully researched her lesson plans and observed her classroom teaching to imitate her style in my own teaching, not just by her request, but in the hope of pleasing her for a good grade on my teaching internship. In my second teaching experience, I just copycatted the whole syllabus from the previous instructor of that course; since I was actually not familiar with most of the texts I was using in class, I often just summarized the major points of the texts to present them to my students. In both teaching experiences, in my lesson plans, I always laid down in great details the objectives I wanted to achieve for my students through my teaching; or specifically, the "basics" or "essentials" my students were expected to grasp by the end of class. Those objectives could be "Know the meanings of the first six English words in Lesson 2 and spell them correctly," "Grasp the use of What questions," "Be aware of the major arguments of the Big Five educational philosophies," "Understand the concepts of 'formal curriculum,' 'null curriculum,' and 'hidden curriculum,'" etc. I was focused on my own "teaching" of the "curriculum," a pre-laid running track for students to cover in order for them to reach the finish line, rather than on students' responses to it – the "*currere*,"² their lived experience running on that track, or specifically, the students' actual learning. In other words, I put too much emphasis on the direct teaching of so called knowledge, truth or facts from a textbook or syllabus, taking

² Compared with the notion of curriculum as a static running track, William Pinar (1975) understands curriculum in its Latin root of "*currere*" – the curriculum in the active and verb form. Madeline Grumet (1976) argues that *currere* seeks to know "the experience of the running of one particular runner, on one particular track, on one particular day, in one particular wind" (36).

for granted that students came with “empty” minds. This reminds me of the documentary movie, *Waiting for Superman* (2010), which radically critiques the American public education, claims that the secret of good education should be “simple”: “A teacher in school



Figure 1.1 *Waiting for Superman*

should be filling her students with knowledge and sending them on the way.” It describes such an “inspiring” image of teaching: after the teacher pours “knowledge” into the student’s head, the student’s face becomes enlightened with angel’s wings appearing and unfolding on his back.

Nel Noddings (2007) argues that such direct teaching in our current schooling system is concerned with the question “Has Johnny learned X?” rather than with another far more interesting question, “What has Johnny learned?” (5) – “When we say that ‘students will do X’ as a result of our instruction, we often forget to add, ‘if they want to’” (55). Maxine Greene (1995) claims that this “‘top-down’ teaching and supervision has to be questioned” (89). William Doll thinks that this teaching just focuses upon “what is taught” rather than “who is taught.”³ I think this traditional direct teaching of knowledge does violence not only to students but also to teachers, for it ignores not only “who is taught” but also “who is teaching.” Teachers, to some extent, become mere mediums through which the basics or essentials are transferred from textbooks to students. These factors may contribute to what bell hooks calls (1994) “a serious crisis in education: students do not want to learn and teachers do not want to teach” (12). In this context, both teaching and learning turn into boring, unhappy and even traumatic experiences for teachers and students. This is echoed by the critique of John Dewey (1963/1938) that students

³ Personal communication in the summer of 2007.

would “associate the learning process with ennui and boredom” (27).

Furthermore, John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey (1915) state in “Schools of To-Morrow” that as students resist this teaching-as-telling,⁴ many teachers “even go so far as to assume that the mind is naturally averse to learning – which is like assuming that the digestive organs are averse to food and have either to be coaxed or bullied into having anything to do with it” (4). In other words, as many educators implicitly or explicitly believe, our students need to be *taught* to learn, they forget that learning should be as natural a thing for children as food is to a human’s digestive organs. The food metaphor reminds me of the spinach story told by Gregory Bateson (1972). When Bateson taught an informal course for psychiatric residents in the Veterans Administration Hospital at Palo Alto, one of the questions he gave to the class for discussion was:

A certain mother habitually rewards her small son with ice cream after he eats his spinach. What additional information would you need to be able to predict whether the child will: a. Come to love or hate spinach; b. Love or hate ice cream, or c. Love or hate Mother? (xvii)

When I read this question raised by Bateson, I paused for a long time at that page. In our schools, who is that mother? What is the ice cream? And spinach? What would be the result? Can it be questioned why the boy needs to eat spinach? If not, what else can he eat? How can one promote a healthy eating habit without the stimulus of ice cream?

Too often our teachers teach in school as that mother behaves, arbitrarily assuming what is the best for their children to learn or eat without considering or asking children’s own opinions. Even if teachers recognize children’s disinterest in what is taught, the spinach, usually they would offer the attractive reward of ice cream for eating spinach – “to cover it [subject material] with sugar-coating; to conceal its barrenness by intermediate and unrelated material; and finally,

⁴ I borrow the phrase of “teaching-as-telling” from Donna Trueit and Sarah Smitherman’s (2006) “Beyond Teaching-as-Telling: Occasioning Conversation” in which they quote Kimball Wiles’ questioning that “Is teaching for efficient learning directing and telling?” (quoted from Wiles, 1952, 10).

as it were, to get the child to swallow and digest the unpalatable morsel while he is enjoy tasting something quite different” (Dewey, 1990/1956, 208).

In my two teaching experiences, I had been familiar with the use of these tricky methods of sugar-coating to persuade students to eat spinach with the attraction of ice cream – to allure or force them to learn what is taught to them under the reward or pressure or punishment of grades. In fact, these are in some sense very *efficient* teaching methods, especially when a teacher is under high pressure to cover a certain amount of material in time for standardized testing. The questions Bateson raises at the end of the spinach story, however, pushes me to ponder upon what I had never thought of before, the results of such teaching. Will students come to love or hate what they are persuaded or even forced to learn? What will they think of the sugar-coating method, or ice cream, the reward for boring learning? How will they think of their teachers using the tricks? The following arguments from Dewey (1963/1938) might answer these questions:

Perhaps the greatest of all pedagogical fallacies is the notion that a person learns only the particular thing he is studying at the time. Collateral learning in the way of *formation of enduring attitudes*, of likes and dislikes, may be and often is much more important than the spelling lesson or lesson in geography or history that is learned. For these attitudes are fundamentally what count in the future. *The most important attitude that can be formed is that of desire to go on learning.* (48, emphasis added)

When a good-intentioned mother forces her little boy to eat the spinach even with a reward of ice cream, she forgets the boy might thus hardly feel happy during those meals and never eat spinach or other vegetables when he can freely choose what to eat. This can also apply to teaching and learning, as Dewey quotes from an American humorist “It makes no difference what you teach a boy so long as he doesn’t like it” (1966/1916, 134). Dewey is absolutely right that the “collateral learning” of “*enduring attitudes* of likes and dislikes” is much more significant than the actual content of learning. Unfortunately, few of us as teachers have

genuinely realized this.

This external top-down control in traditional direct teaching is also evident in the unquestioning acceptance of curriculum, the reduction of curriculum to a detailed list of behavioral objectives listed in the teachers' lesson plans. As written, behavioral objectives specify exactly "what students will do, to what level of proficiency, and under what sort of assessment," Noddings (2007) critiques that the lesson plans are "no longer supposed to emphasize what the teacher would do, but, rather, what students were expected to do as a result of instruction" (53). One of the greatest dangers of this, according to Dewey (1910), is that students' chief concern becomes to accommodate themselves to teachers' expectations rather than to passionately engage with what to learn: "'Is this right?' comes to mean 'Will this answer or process satisfy the teacher?'" (50). Therefore all students' learning is directed to induce correct responses on high stakes testing. In other words, the boy eats the spinach just to get the ice cream or please his mother, not for its healthy ingredients.

Much worse is that under the heavy pressure of teaching-as-telling for testing, often teachers forget to double check whether the spinach they are required to feed their students is fresh enough to eat. I really wonder and worry that, even if teachers find that the spinach is rotten in "inert" knowledge or facts (borrowing Whitehead's phrase, 1967/1929, Chap. 1), they would still feel obliged to feed students the moldy spinach. Then, where is the remedy for the mother and boy in that metaphoric story? How can mothers help their children build habits of healthy and balanced diets, and teachers help their students learn with passion in a non-behavioristic way? How can teaching be not just all about telling and passive listening?

At the end of his book "Mind and Nature" (2002/1979), Bateson questions, "*As teachers, are we wise?*" (210, emphasis added). This is a question deserving deep pondering on the part of

all educators. While we question the authoritative teaching role of teachers, are there any alternatives to, and challenges of, what we typically think of as teaching, specifically traditional direct teaching, in classroom settings? This led me to another journey, that of “*en-teaching*.”

Another Unsettling Journey, to “*En-Teaching*”

Since I began to look back, and to reflect critically, on those two unsuccessful teaching experiences, I have been engaged in a difficult struggle with the question, “What makes a teacher, especially a good teacher?” In other words, what can I, as a teacher, teach to my students, and how can I teach it if I want to be a good teacher? This seems to be a simple question for a person whose major field of study has been education for about fourteen years. But it is definitely not simple for me. I tried a lot of changes in teaching my LSU EDCI 2030 class. In the following semester, I had an almost completely new syllabus. I chose the texts that I felt brought forth my passion on the issues of teaching and learning, and put these into the students’ reading packet. Both the midterm exam and the final exam were removed, for I thought – and still think – these to be not only useless but a waste of time in encouraging students to just mechanically memorize the “right” answers of all review questions before the exam while aiming for good grades. Instead, final group projects on self-chosen topics that interest all group members were added to the syllabus. The format of the class was then much more oriented toward conversations between student and teacher, student and student, rather than dominant lecturing by the instructor...

These changes were not a smooth shift and continue to represent a struggle for me. But at least now I have become much more comfortable with the mistakes I still occasionally make in teaching. While I experimented with different changes in teaching my class, I also gradually built up my critical, reflexive thoughts on teaching through playing with the ideas of a great variety of

educational scholars and with their different conceptualizations of teaching. To name just a few of them: John Dewey, William Doll, Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, bell hooks, Nel Noddings and Alfred North Whitehead. As I read these wonderful theorists' various critiques of traditional direct teaching practices and expectations of how we could teach, I felt so deeply in my heart the need of a new conceptualization, a new vocabulary to express a different teaching.

While I tried to find possible alternatives to direct teaching, I began by examining the spinach as knowledge or truth handed over to students in that metaphoric story narrated by Bateson (1972). In my first lesson in my educational major fourteen years ago, one of my professors told me, "As teachers, our first and foremost responsibility is to *teach truth* to our students." Even now I can recall so clearly his passionate lecture in that class: "We teachers should be the most faithful preachers as shepherd to guide our helpless lambs in the light of truth: this is why our profession of education is called *enlightenment*." That was such inspiring and touching advice for me at that time that I began to imagine my future career as the hero leading the blind out of the black world into the light, as in Plato's cave allegory. But reflections on my past teaching experiences raised more and more questions in my mind on the direct teaching of so called truth. I began to wonder: Do we, as teachers, really possess such a thing called truth, as spinach to feed our students? What does truth mean for us and for our students? Is our major job to teach such truth to students? If yes, how can we teach truth? If not, what should we teach, outside the box of absolute truth? ...

The question of truth as it relates to the teacher's role in the classroom raises not only issues of what and how we should teach, but challenges the very purpose of teaching. Since truth itself is a major question of phenomenology, I choose to use the works of German philosopher Martin Heidegger for his phenomenological treatment of truth with the hope that it can shed

some important light on the fundamental questions of teaching and learning.

When I explored Heidegger's dis-rupting⁵ explorations of the essence of truth for insights into taken-for-granted assumptions about education and the purpose of teaching and learning, I felt more and more a resonance to his phenomenological perspective on (un)truth, especially the notion of "clearing," which can be aligned with one essential spirit of Chinese Taoism, "inaction" (无为). This western-eastern connection or bridging enabled me to reexamine both concepts from different perspectives for genuinely new insights.

My further study of Taoist inaction led me to coin the word, "*en-teaching*" to express my idea of how teachers can teach through paradoxically non-teaching, without implying a binary opposition between teaching and *non-teaching*. In the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2004), the application of the prefix *en-* in French and hence in English is usually used to form verbs from nouns, adjectives or other verbs in which the notion of "against" rarely or never occurs (468).⁶ In this sense, *en-teaching* not only does not suggest the opposition of teaching/not teaching, but focuses on teaching as a verb, a dynamic being in relation, rather than a noun, say, a technical work or task to be completed on time.⁷ The hyphen in *en-teaching* suggests both the rupture and relation between *en-teaching* and teaching – a dynamic and generative space full of

⁵ The use of the hyphen reflects the complex way Heidegger uses concepts such as "disrupt" to include the process, action, and relationships in this case of disrupting.

⁶ In OED, from 14th century on, the prefixes of *in-(im-)* and *en-(em-)* have been frequently substituted for each other. In the 17th century, the form *in- (im-)* was generally preferred but the now prevailing use is *en- (em-)* in English.

⁷ I suggest *en-teaching*, to some degree, is closely related to the essence of teaching. Similarly, Heidegger (1993/1949) says, the essence of house or a state is not "a generic type" but "the ways in which house and state hold sway, administer themselves, develop, and decay—the way they "essentially unfold" (*wesen*)" (335). Then he turns to an old word John Peter Hebel uses in his poem, "Ghost on Kanderer Street," *die Weserei*—"It means the city hall, inasmuch as there the life of the community gathers and village existence is constantly in play, i.e., essentially unfolds. It is from the verb *wesen* that the noun is derived" (335). In this sense, the essence of teaching is not a noun, say, a general formula, a set of criteria or behavioral objectives, a list of issues or items that can be summarized or defined to be applied to all, but a verb, *en-teaching* that is "constantly in play." Therefore, my use of the prefix of "*en-*" is different from its use in the words such as "enframe," "enclose," and "encapsulate" in the sense of putting all things inside a fixed framework.

useful tensions. This view of teaching opens up as a phenomenological way of being in the classroom described by *en-teaching*, and has significant implications not only for relationships in the classroom including students' relationships with content and knowing, but also for (using a metaphor from Ted Aoki, 2005) a "lived curriculum."

In my further exploration of *en-teaching*, I try to play with the concepts offered by all those educational theorists previously mentioned to tap into the "not-yet" possibilities of *en-teaching* through a cacophony of different conceptualizations of teaching with a special focus on the following three research questions: What is *en-teaching*? How does *en-teaching* differ from traditional direct teaching? What are the curriculum and classroom implications of *en-teaching* especially drawn from the complex conversations between Heidegger, Dewey and Lao Tzu? I also hope this lens of *en-teaching* can help teachers view their traditional *teaching* responsibility differently, and thus see other possibilities of teaching in *en-teaching*.

My explorations of *en-teaching* in this dissertation take the following general form: Chapter one is an introduction; Chapter two is a literature review of direct teaching in both America and China; Chapter three explores Heidegger's concepts of teaching and learning, especially his own exploration of (un)truth as clearings between light and darkness; Chapter four develops the notion of *en-teaching*, built upon Heidegger's notion of teaching with additional insights from Dewey and Lao Tzu; Chapter five is a summation.

Methodology: An Autoethnographic Approach

One of my primary initiatives in conducting this project of *en-teaching* is to give myself a precious opportunity to go back to my past teaching experiences, especially the first two unsuccessful ones. I want to tell stories, my own stories of teaching and learning as both are so

intimately and inseparably intertwined with each other. Along with theoretical analyses of different conceptualizations of *en-teaching*, I use my personal stories of critical incidents or moments through my educational experiences to maintain that generative tension between theory and practice⁸ in a recursive loop. I believe that no matter how great a theoretical argument sounds, if it cannot speak to me through my own experience to finally flow into my blood, it would be dumb to me. If my writing project in this dissertation is a never finished necklace in progress, the theoretical analytical line would be the string going through sparkling pearls of small narratives collected from my past memories of teaching and learning. Furthermore, in this critical self study or examination, I try to talk to myself in different teaching modes in multi-I conversations. There is no intention of making the overly simple, arrogant or quick judgment that I am wiser than or superior to others. In other words, this is not intended to be an “inspiring” story of “improvement,” or one illustrating movement from failure to success.

In my first drafts of this section, I had “autobiography” as one of the methodologies since I planned to tell my own life stories. It was during my writing process that I ran into Carolyn Ellis’s fascinating work on autoethnography. I felt such a strong resonance between this methodology and what I wanted to do in this dissertation that finally I switched my primary methodology from autobiography to autoethnography.

John Creswell (2007) says autoethnography is an approach gaining prominence in qualitative research championed by Carolyn Ellis and others. Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000) claim that the term “autoethnography” has been in circulation for over two decades as “an

⁸ As for the generative tension between theory and practice, Pinar and Grumet (1981) argue, “Too often has educational theory been reduced to a form of idealism that must be instantly transformed into activity. Although the field situation provides a context where our theory and practice confront one another, our goal is not to resolve their differences, not to reduce one to the dimensions of the other. Rather, we play one against the other so as to disclose their limitations, and in so doing enlarge in capacity and intensity the focus of each” (37-38). In this sense, I do not intend to erase the dynamic tension between theory and practice or reduce either of them to the other, but try to play with that generative tension.

autobiographical genre of writing and research that displays multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural” (739) – a move “from traditional ethnography to writing ethnography of the self as an evocative, unfolding, scenic, and dialogic plot” (Ellis, 2009, 32). In some sense, autoethnography lies in the overlapping area between ethnography and narrative inquiry, specifically autobiography, as it is often regarded as part of those qualitative research genres.

Autoethnography is a method to study the self by exposing the self to not only oneself, but also to readers through telling personal evocative stories. Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue that all these stories need “to be used rather than analyzed; to be told and retold rather than theorized and settled; to offer lessons for further conversation rather than undebatable conclusions; and to substitute the companionship of intimate detail for the loneliness of abstracted facts” (744). This means that the use of personal stories in autoethnography does not merely aim to *prove* or *draw* any final theoretical conclusion through rational analyses, but push people to feel, think and question in a tension that can never be resolved. In some sense, personal emotions play a more important role than rational logic in autoethnography. Besides, when I write my life stories emotionally and spiritually from my “gut,” I have to, at the same time, open myself to my readers, and turn myself inside out, thus confront criticisms of not only how I write, but also how I live – a vulnerable and dangerous writing. Ellis (2009) writes:

I hoped that readers would see my focus on self as an avenue to learn from my candor and vulnerability. Necessarily, the exposure had to include betrayals, uncertainties, and self-doubt, including doubt about what was actually written. I wanted readers to trust that I had started with what I did not know and discovered what I did know through the process of writing. As an honest writer, I never pretended to have it all worked out, or to suggest that the finished product disclosed the ‘bare truth’ (108)

While Ellis talks about the “betrayals, uncertainties, and self-doubt” in autoethnographic writings,

she touches upon one of the most important demands for autoethnographers – self-questioning. This is a difficult process for it can generate a lot of fears, emotional pains, and even humiliations. I have felt this heavy pressure even before I really began writing the first chapter of my dissertation.

This is the fifth year of my teaching that sophomore course in our department. Now I can feel at ease and even proud to chat with my friends, professors and family, both here in the United States and in China, about my current teaching experience, even though I still have many struggles and difficulties with(in) it. I would be glad or proud to let them know the news that I got 4.7 out of 5 in the students' evaluations of my class at the end of last semester, the comments my students wrote to express how they appreciate my class, and the "Thank You" card I just received from a student who took my class one year ago and now enters the graduate teacher education program. At the same time, I am not so willing to show my difficult struggles or problems I encounter in teaching. I also had tried my best to hide my first two big teaching *failures* from everybody including myself although I used them in self-critical reflections to help my future teaching – they are just like two deep scars in my heart that I had been so hesitant to let people see. I want everybody that I know and knows me to believe that I am *always* a good teacher, not a poor one.

How could I let other people see my dark side that I want to bury deep into my memory? This is really a great challenge for me. There are, however, rewards along with the danger or vulnerability of revealing one's self to others: "you come to understand yourself in deeper ways. And with understanding yourself comes understanding others. Autoethnography provides an avenue for doing something meaningful for yourself and the world" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, 738). I finally decided to share with my colleagues not only my conceptualization of *en-teaching*

but my experiences of failure in direct teaching. Since autoethnography is concerned with personal narrative, it is never only about the self – it tries to understand self in a cultural context. Ellis (2009) quotes Mykhalovskiy who declares that “To write about self is to write about social experience” and then questions “If culture circulates through all of us, then how can autoethnography not connect to a world beyond the self?” (34) As a subsystem of the society, our schools are never ivory towers where teaching and learning occur – we are always teaching and learning contextually in particular cultural systems at particular historical moments. This is also why I choose to do literature reviews of traditional direct teaching in China and the United States. Since our stories are shaped and made more sense of in our cultural context, it is not only important but necessary to put any “personal” narrative in a much larger cultural background. Further, Ellis continues,

Good autoethnography works toward a community, where we might speak together of our experiences, find commonality of spirit, companionship in our sorrow, balm for our wounds, and solace in reaching out to those in need as well. As Coles (1989, p. 22) says, a good story is one that others can take in and use for themselves. (229-230)

In other words, a good story can be useful for not only the story teller as a personal narrative of the self but the whole group or community. I believe what I experienced, am experiencing and will experience as a teacher in my personal narratives of teaching is not completely unique to me – I see now and in the future that the traumatic experience I had in traditional direct teaching and the possibilities of *en-teaching* could also belong to other teachers. I hope my telling and sharing of this autoethnographic account on my teaching experiences can help my colleague teachers as, borrowing Ellis’s phrase, “truthful, vulnerable, evocative, and therapeutic” narratives (135).

Chapter Two

Literature Review of Teaching-as-Telling

Education is not an affair of “telling” and being told.

--John Dewey, 1966/1916, 38

To act in front of students as if the truth belongs only to the teacher is not only preposterous but also false.

--Paulo Freire, 2001, 39

We operate from the givens, follow acceptable procedures, and derive objective and certain truths that are already stated within the conditions of inquiry.

--M. Jayne Fleener, 2002, 191

I clearly remember the following passionate argument made by one of the professors I had when I first entered the major of education: “As teachers, our first and foremost responsibility is to teach truth to our students. We should be the most faithful preachers as shepherds to guide our helpless lambs in the light of truth: this is why our profession of education is called *enlightenment*.” From this professor’s perspective, knowledge is truth and it can be taught, simply, by telling.¹

Reflecting on my past two unsettling journeys of teaching produces questions in my mind about the teaching of *truth*: What is truth? What are the relations of truth, teaching and learning? While I struggle with these questions of truth related to teaching, my educational experience as both teacher and student in China and the United States intricately resonate with each other. In this chapter, from the vast field of literature dealing with teaching methods, I review selected

¹ In the Concise Oxford English Dictionary (2004), truth is defined as “The quality or state of being true: that which is true as opposed to false; a fact or belief that is accepted as true” (1549) and knowledge as “1. Information and skills acquired through experience or education: the sum of what is known; true, justified belief, as opposed to opinion. 2. Awareness or familiarity gained by experience” (789). Apparently, both have the same connotation of being “true” – justified and established fact or belief “as opposed to false” and are therefore often conflated.

literature critical of traditional direct teaching in both America and China and suggest the essence of this “teaching-as-telling” in both countries is, in some sense, the same – the will to control.²

Literature Review of the Critiques of Traditional Direct Teaching in the United States

One of the saddest features of contemporary education [is that] much of what is offered in schools is promptly forgotten, and this is true at every level... Year after year, we hear critics wailing over the results of various surveys that show convincingly that high school graduates do not know the dates of the Civil War or who fought whom in World War II. *But we do teach these things...* Our response to this state of affairs is to press harder, retain children in grade 3 until they pass a standardized test (which some may never do), and refuse diplomas to high school students who cannot prove that they know what we take to be important facts. But even if test scores were to rise (and they might, minimally), the material would be mostly forgotten after the test.

--Nel Noddings, 2006, 23, emphasis original

“Are you doing good today in school, honey?” I asked Tracy, age 4, since she seemed unhappy when I picked her up from the Pre-K class. She quietly took out a blue folder from her backpack and gave it to me. Then I knew what had happened, and unsurprisingly, Tracy got a sad face on the daily conduct chart in the folder with a note on the bottom, “Tracy giggled with Louisa in the bathroom before lunch and used outside voice in the dance center activity this afternoon.” I looked up from that note to Tracy, and she quickly blurted out, “Believe me, Mom, I will behave myself in the future.” I smiled, “Do you know what it means to behave yourself?” “Of course, I know. It means I am supposed to be a good listener of Ms. Murphy.” After a short pause, she added, “And I will not move anywhere in class.” Looking into Tracy’s earnest eyes, I suddenly did not know how to respond. I closed the blue folder and looked at its cover, a list of

² This refers to Heidegger’s (1993/1949) phrase of “the will to mastery” in criticizing the essence of modern technology (313). Further on in this chapter, I will return to and explore this idea.

“First 9 Weeks Skills,” including objectives like, “Identify at least eight uppercase or lowercase letters in random order,” “Counts by ones to 10 orally,” and “Identifies rectangles, squares, circles, and triangles using concrete models.”

The next day Tracy came back home very happily with a smiley face on her conduct chart. I, however, was not happier than the previous day, because I was not sure that was exactly what I wanted my little Tracy to get from school. As I look forward to Tracy’s excellence in the areas listed by school as “letter, sound, number, shape, and social recognitions,” I hope Tracy can learn not just *these things* or merely be a good listener in the classroom and that her teachers will not always “operate from the givens, follow[ing] acceptable procedures.” My worry is that if education becomes just “an affair of ‘telling’ and being told” for Tracy, she might have to face the crisis or danger presented in the quotation by Nel Noddings on contemporary education. As students are taught to be good listeners, they become perfect empty vessels for teachers to fill with so called truth or knowledge. This traditional direct teaching is criticized by Paulo Freire (2000/1970) as banking education in which “the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filling, and storing the deposits” (72). In this metaphor, truth is viewed as a fixed gift bestowed by the *knowing* teacher to the *ignorant* student and the teacher needs only to “operate from the givens, follow[ing] acceptable procedures.” Therefore, teaching becomes a mechanical top-down transfer from teacher to student. As I review the literature critical of teaching-as-telling and of learning-as-being-told, I identify three problematics relevant to my inquiry: 1) the teacher’s authoritative attitude, 2) pre-selected knowledge as truth in certain subject materials, and 3) students developing resistance to active learning.

The first problematic, the authority of the teacher in traditional direct teaching, has been critiqued by many educational scholars. Freire (2001) thinks when teachers consider themselves

to be superior to students in the classroom, they often reject opinions different from their own: “The different becomes not an ‘other’ worthy of any respect, but a ‘this’ or ‘that’ to be despised and detested” (108). Freire (1998) argues,

An educator’s authoritarianism is not only manifested in the repressive use of authority, which restricts the movements of the learners. It is equally manifested in a number of opportunities, in his or her excessive vigilance over the learners, in his or her lack of respect for the learners’ creativity, and for his or her cultural identity. It is also manifested in his or her lack of acceptance of the popular-class learners’ way of being, the manner in which he or she warns the students and censures them. An educator’s authoritarianism is also manifested within which the learners are restricted to the mechanical memorization of what the educator deposits in them. That is the ‘banking educators,’ as I termed him or her in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (90-91)

Unfortunately, I had quite a few such “banking” teachers who made their own voices the most important in the classroom. One of the disciplinary rules that was deeply imprinted in my mind since kindergarten is “Never ever interject in class without permission.” This means students must follow teachers’ instructions and never challenge the teacher’s authority. As Freire vividly describes the images of teachers’ “excessive vigilance over the learners,” I am reminded of platforms in my past schools. If you step into any K-12 classroom in China, you will find a raised platform, a *dais*, in the front of the classroom. When teachers stand on the dais, the message is that teachers are higher than students not only physically but intellectually – a symbol of authority or hierarchy.

bell hooks (1994) thinks “part of what the banking system does for professors is to create the system where we feel that by the end of the semester every student will be sitting there filling out their evaluations testifying that I’m a ‘good teacher’” (154). She says we need to realize that the purpose of teaching is not to feel good about *me* or the class, for that cozy feeling could block the possibility of growth. One direct result of such unquestioned respect for the teacher’s

authority in the classroom is that students begin to depreciate their own ability or potentials. hooks writes,

I notice many students have difficulty taking seriously what they themselves have to say because they are convinced that the only person who says anything of note is the teacher. Even if another student does say something that the teacher says is good, helpful, smart, whatever, it's only through the act of the teacher's validating that the other students take note. If the teacher doesn't seem to indicate that this is something worth noting, few students will... At what point does one say what someone else is saying ought not to be pursued in the classroom? (150)

The question raised by hooks at the end of the above quotation is very powerful for me. Who has the right to decide what should/could be discussed in a classroom? And how? Martin Buber (1967) warns,

since the educator has to such an extent replaced the master, the danger has arisen that the new phenomenon, the will to educate, may degenerate into arbitrariness, and that the educator may carry out his selection and his influence from himself and his idea of the pupil, *not from the pupil's own reality*. (50, emphasis added)

Since this “will to educate” easily leads to the arbitrariness of the teacher in determining what and how he wants to teach and thus influence his students, the teacher has to be careful, not to be overly willful. Unfortunately, in traditional, direct teaching, it is the teacher who often makes arbitrary decisions of what should or should not be pursued in class and thus validating or invalidating students' thinking, speaking, and/or acting.

The second problematic, preselected knowledge as truth, comes forward in the Tyler Rationale and the behavioristic objective movement is spawned. Here teaching is reduced to a simple, mechanistic transfer of knowledge. It is not coincidental that delineating “objectives” is the first step and in some sense the most significant one in the Tyler Rationale. About this priority of “objectives” in traditional teaching, Noddings (2007) writes,

Most advocates of the current reform movement insist on a high degree of specificity for standards. Teachers must know exactly what they should teach, and

students must know exactly what they should learn. Notice that, under such a system, we can usually answer the question, Has Johnny learned X?—but we cannot answer the far more interesting question, What has Johnny learned? There is no encouragement in this system to invite students to follow different interests with respect to broad topic or support teachers in presenting exciting material that may or may not be learned. (5-6)

When teachers pay attention to checking their students' understanding – “Have you learned this or that?” rather than “What have you learned?” – a great many precious teachable moments and learning opportunities are missed. When Tracy has to count lots of objects time and time again in her class, she may finally be able to count by ones from one to ten, but my concern is what she might have learned otherwise if Ms. M., her teacher, was not pressured by, or perhaps even obsessed with, that list of “aims” on Tracy's blue folder. Dewey (1966/1916) thinks this pursuit of “speedy, accurately measurable, correct results” requires that teachers not encourage students to deal with questions in diverse ways, thus restricting “their vision to the one path the teacher's mind happens to approve” (175). As one hundred readers may imagine one hundred Hamlets, one hundred students can have at least one hundred ways of approaching the same problem. Teaching of the one and only shortcut to the problem merely restricts students' creativity and imagination and thus erases rich potentials of what is not-yet. When overemphasis is placed upon the end point of that shortcut, the “right answer,” what is ignored is the dynamic process of the adventurous journey – “Our tragic error is that we are [so] anxious for the results of growth that we neglect the process of growing” (7).

In the same vein, Noddings (2007) argues that chances of incidental learning are missed in this abbreviated process of growing:

Incidental learning occurs in the course of conversation, as ideas are being developed. Incidental learning takes place without its being specified as an aim or objective... Obviously, we cannot depend on incidental learning for an entire curriculum but it is shortsighted to eliminate the possibility of incidental learning

by specifying one narrow objective for each lesson. It is good now and then (quite often, actually) to get off the main road and travel the byways, letting knowledge stick to us like burrs in the field, as Robert Frost describe the poet's way of acquiring knowledge. (56-57)

I especially appreciate Noddings's suggestion that we occasionally "get off the main road and travel the byways, letting knowledge stick to us like burrs in the field." In this runaway from the main road, both teachers and students *inquire* rather than merely *acquire* so called knowledge for particular objectives – serendipity may thus be encountered. Many public school teachers in the context of traditional direct teaching feel extremely confined by "set lesson plans where they have little choice about the content of the material they are required to teach," where they are required to simply "relay information as though the work they do is akin to that of any worker on an assembly line" (hooks, 2003, 16). In this productivity model, teachers and students both are put under great pressure in regard to testing – everyone is concerned only with the question of *how* to get an A in the class rather than critically questioning *why* I need that A. This brings me to the third problematic related to traditional direct teaching – students developing resistance to learning, or the crisis hooks (1994) describes as "students do not want to learn and teachers do not want to teach" (12).

In this serious crisis in education, hooks (2003) thinks learning becomes goal oriented – "It is not valued in itself but [only] as a means to something else" (173). Unfortunately, this echoes my current experience as a teacher educator. Many of the students are so smart that they know how to please their teacher and get the best evaluation at the end of semester. I encourage my students to feel free to ask any question in class, but the most frequent questions I get from them are about *my* grading scale, *my* specific requirements for an assignment – all concern grades, or in another sense, what the teacher specifically wants from them. I think this is a shame,

the inevitable result of traditional direct teaching: the all-knowing teacher's judgment of whether students achieve predetermined behavioral objectives becomes the ultimate criterion of both teaching and learning; therefore, grades are the highest and only confirmation of students' learning.

(H)ooks (2003) asserts that today's US classrooms are more likely to be comprised of students who are "obsessed with grades and willing to do almost anything to ensure that they will get the evaluation that most boosts their future chances of success" (166). This orientation to future success encourages the crazy zeal for those so called right answers and therefore the student's chief concern is to meet or exceed the teachers' expectations rather than passionately engage with what is to be learned. Students themselves seem to understand their learning as an exchange: in return for correct answers and behavioral change, students get teachers' praise, high test scores, good grades, and diplomas in the market of schooling. Therefore, students do not necessarily learn to learn, to search for and assess knowledge on their own. I find the three problematics I have discussed reflect a depersonalization of both teaching and learning, teachers and learners considered instrumentally, objectively, compelled to limit their visions related to "enlightening" truth.

After reviewing selected literature critical of the "teaching-as-telling" in America, I now turn to the literature relevant for the millions of classrooms in China, focusing on three major historical influences on teaching that led to the development of teaching-as-narrating, the dominant mode, along with influential critiques of contemporary Chinese educational researchers.

Literature Review of the Dominant Teaching Method as Narrating in China

As reported by the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China, China now has over 160 million students and 10 million full time teachers in Grades 1-12 public schools.³ Teaching is a major and culturally valued profession in China. Most of the literature on teaching I choose to review here is from widely used official texts for teacher education programs in public universities and colleges, or more directly, the so-called national textbook for millions of pre-service teachers.⁴ In this section, I focus on the tradition of “teaching-as-narrating” method which has been influential until now in China in different historical periods: 1) ancient China before the 19th century, 2) modern China, 1902-1948, and 3) contemporary China from 1949 to the present.⁵ The method of “teaching-as-narrating” is also called, in Chinese educational texts, “expository method,” “narrating method,” “oral presentation method,” and “telling method.” I argue that as “teaching-as-narrating” developed historically in the Chinese educational tradition and culture, rather than being merely *a* teaching method – is, like the American “teaching-as-telling” method, the dominant teaching mode. This narrating is essentially an authoritative telling.

Ancient China, before the 19th Century

Teaching has a long history in China. As early as the Shang Dynasty, around the 14th

³ This data is from the official website of the Ministry of Education of P.R. China (<http://www.moe.edu.cn/publicfiles/business/htmlfiles/moe/s4958/index.html>). Kindergarten is not in the formal schooling system in China.

⁴ The majority of higher educational institutions and almost all top ones in China are public. The following texts I use in this literature review section are specified on book covers as “National Textbook for universities and colleges: Educational Psychology” (Shao, 1997), “Theories of Instruction” (Shi & Cui, 2009/1999), “Theories of Instruction” (C. Wang, 2005), “Theories of Curriculum and Instruction” (B. Wang, 2009).

⁵ In this section, all literatures I review are in Chinese, so I have translated them into English. Since all translations are, in essence, interpretations, I provide original Chinese texts along with *my* English translations.

century B.C., the word, “teaching,” appeared in oracle characters (Shi & Cui, 2009/1999; C. Wang, 2005; B. Wang, 2008).⁶ In this section, I first trace “teaching” to the origin of the character in ancient Chinese language, then review the oldest theoretical work on teaching in China, and finally examine two of the most important influences upon the teaching tradition in China: Confucianism and Legalism.



Figure 2.1
Oracle character
of “Teaching” (教)
(in Shi & Cui, 4)

Like many other ancient Chinese written character systems, oracle characters were formed from one or more pictographs indicating meanings; the character, “teaching,” is not an exception. The oracle character of “teaching” on the left is similar to the contemporary one in Chinese, “教.” It describes well an ancient event of teaching: a person, on the right, raises a stick up high to “teach” a child, on the left, math, as the two Xs above that child’s head represent the number “5” twice in oracle characters. It is not hard to find that the character of “teaching” evolves from that of “learning”: the right part of the oracle character of “teaching” is actually that of “learning,” a child learning the number 5. Moreover, in “Annotation and Interpretation” (2007/120), the character of “teaching” (教) is defined as “to follow what is given from above” while associated with teachers’ physical punishment and students’ filial piety and obedience (152).⁷ From the origins of the character of “teaching” in the ancient Chinese language, two things are striking: first, “teaching” originates

⁶ Oracle characters were invented by the people of the Shang dynasty to cut in the shoulder bones of oxen or plastrons of turtle shells. They attempted to tell fortunes by exposing the oracle bone to fire to see the change of bone. About 4,500 oracle characters have now been extracted from oracle bones.

⁷ “Annotations and Interpretations” (《说文解字》) is the first dictionary in ancient China explaining Chinese characters based upon their structures and etymologies written by Shen Xu in Han Dynasty around 120. Until now, it is still one of the most influential dictionaries in use in China. The original Chinese texts of the entry “teaching” (教) in it are “上所施下所效也. 从支从孝.”

from “learning” and is intimately intertwined with “learning”; second, “teaching” has a strong authoritative sense of “telling” to which students must be listening in obedience. It has not always been so, however; as I explain (below) the earliest known meaning of teaching was subsequently transformed, first by Confucius and his followers, then through the influences of Confucianism and Legalism.

So enmeshed are the characters of teaching and learning in ancient China that they even became interchangeable (Shui & Cui, 2009/1999, p. 7). “On Learning” (《学记》) (2001/300 B.C.) is the oldest theoretical work on teaching in the educational history of not only China but the world (C. Wang, 2005; B. Wang, 2009; Yuan, 2003/1998).⁸ It was written approximately 23,000 years ago by disciples of Confucius based on educational thoughts and practices at that time. This book has only 20 paragraphs consisting of 1229 characters but is very dense and rich, outlining the general aims and functions of education, curriculum designs of different types and levels of schooling, fundamental principles, methods of school administration, classroom instruction, educational evaluations, and teacher education, etc.

On the topic of teaching, the ancient text “On Learning” states that teachers have to know what makes successful teaching as well as poor teaching, and then they can become good teachers (489).⁹ It says, as good singers tempt their audiences to sing together, good teachers should interest students to learn with them (490).¹⁰ Then it critiques that many teachers are so

⁸ It is one of the most important classics in the history of China not just in the field of education. Therefore Chinese people for generations are familiar with its texts. I put the original Chinese texts of all direct quotations taken from it in footnotes.

⁹ The original Chinese texts are “君子既知教之所由兴，又知教之所由废，然后可以为人师也。”

¹⁰ The original Chinese texts are “善歌者，使人继其声；善教者，使人继其志。”

focused on reading to students the texts which students are required to memorize that many students hate learning and their teachers (487).¹¹ It says, therefore, once students graduate, they quickly forget what they've learned from schools (487).¹² Finally, it advocates heuristic teaching: "Lead rather than prod students so that teachers and students can live in a relation of harmony; intrigue rather than dominate students so that students will not feel overwhelmed; enlighten rather than dictate students so that students can think independently and critically" (489).¹³ In addition, while it agrees that "teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin," it claims that when teachers encounter difficulties in teaching, they begin to learn, so teaching and learning can promote each other (484).¹⁴ It concludes that only after learning this heuristic mode of teaching, can people become good teachers, and then good officers, good kings (490).¹⁵

This heuristic mode of teaching, in "On Learning," originates in China from the teachings of Confucius, challenging traditional authoritative teaching-as-telling (B. Wang, 2009; Yuan, 2003/1998; Zhang, 2008). In "The Analects" (2007/300 B.C.), a collection of his conversations with disciples, Confucius argues that teachers should teach each student differently, trying to help students at the pivotal stage in which students want to articulate what they are learning but cannot say clearly – the critical point at which teachers need to carefully guide students to go

¹¹ The original Chinese texts are "今之教者，呻其占毕，多其讯言....故隐其学而疾其师。"

¹² The original Chinese texts are "虽终其业，其去之必速。"

¹³ The original Chinese texts are "道而弗牵则和，强而弗抑则易，开而弗达则思。"

¹⁴ The original Chinese texts are "学学半" and "教然后知困...然后能自强也...教学相长也。"

¹⁵ The original Chinese texts are "能博喻然后能为师，能为师然后能为长，能为长然后能为君。"

beyond to reach another new level of learning (61).¹⁶ Furthermore, this Confucian text emphasizes that active learning and critical thinking must be integrated, for learning without thinking is perplexing while thinking without learning is dangerous (14).¹⁷ These insightful thoughts on heuristic teaching in Confucius are so important in the history of education in China that even today they are familiar to most Chinese teachers and thus inspire their teaching. These valuable educational suggestions call teachers to seriously respect their students, carefully guiding their learning interests according to their personalities, and to regard teaching as an interactive process which promotes critical thinking, self-reflection and (re)searching.

Two primary influences have shifted teaching away from the exemplary recommendations based on the teachings of Confucius. The first is that since the Han dynasty (202 B.C.-220), Confucianism had been used by the ruling classes in feudal China to govern the people as a powerful thought-controlling instrument, especially after the establishment of the imperial examination system in 605. This complex but intricate system selected officials into its administrative bureaucratic system at different levels not based upon social or political status but on their performances in local and national examinations upon serials of Confucian classics. Advertising open competition, fair play, and standardized tests, this examination system held fast to the principle that only high-achievers be granted the tickets to bureaucracy.¹⁸ It can be taken as

¹⁶ The original Chinese texts are “不愤不启，不悱不发。”

¹⁷ The original Chinese texts are “学而不思则罔，思而不学则殆。”

¹⁸ In order to obtain objectivity in evaluation and to avoid possible cheatings in exams, a series of strict rules were used such as searching the examinees before entering the exam site, sealing their names on paper, blocking the examination site during the exam, and separate evaluation of each answer sheet by three different examiners. Test proctors and reexaminations were also employed to make the exams more impartial. Examinations were conducted in spare, isolated examination rooms, and sometimes, would be held within cubicles. Candidates were identified by number rather than name, and examination answers were recopied by a third person before being evaluated to prevent the candidate's handwriting from being recognized.

the oldest standardized testing system in the world. The “rags to riches” stories of the winners in this examination system imbued the Chinese nation with the idea that “All pursuits are of low values; only studying books is high.” The direct result was that almost all middle and upper class parents sent their children to study, to memorize all those required classics for the highly competitive imperial examinations. The main responsibility of teachers was to tell students the “truth” in the Confucian texts, discouraging the student’s own interpretations. Therefore, teaching became dominated by the lecturing or telling of the teacher’s narratives.

The second influence shifting Chinese teaching from Confucian principles is Legalism, a philosophical school emerging alongside but in tension with Confucianism. Hua Zhang’s¹⁹ (2008) historical analysis indicates that Legalism fuses education and political control. With this amalgamation implemented by the Saint Emperor,²⁰ representing all that is right and righteous, rules dominate legal and cultural values, educational and social thought. In the eyes of Legalists, the Saint Emperor dictates the laws of the world; the people can only follow rather than make suggestion or even critique the education he establishes. The effect of the integration of education and politics – based purely on the opinion of the Saint Emperor – is a top-down hierarchy, the Emperor at the top, dictating autocratically to a population of followers. In this sense, the direct aim of teaching or education is to reproduce the current state or hierarchy of the society. More specifically, education functions as the handmaiden of politics, providing rigid social control as well as stability.

¹⁹ Zhang is not only one of most influential contemporary educational researchers in China, but one of the leading figures in the current national curriculum reform in Chinese public schools. His new book (2008) which sharply criticizes the dominant teaching-as-narrating/telling mode in schools has been widely received in China.

²⁰ For Legalists, the Emperor, the ruler of the country, should be a Saint. This is similar to the Philosopher King in Plato.

The marriage of instrumentalized Confucianism, with the invention of the imperial examination system, and Legalism, involving grand, totalizing and essentializing narratives, the Emperor's *truths*, which aimed to control and channel individual minds, laid the ground for "teaching-as-narrating" education in today's China. Zhang remarks that "teaching-as-narrating then achieved the highest status in the history of education" so "it is [now] not just a teaching method but represents the educational culture of 'teacher tells and students listen quietly'" (26-27), reducing learning to "receptive learning" (75). It is interesting to notice that the word of "narrating" (讲授) in "teaching-as-narrating" in Chinese is always constituted by two characters, "lecture" (讲) and "offer" (授). It seems to imply that the process of teaching is one in which the teacher offers student truth through lecturing. In this sense, Zhang concludes, this "teaching-as-narrating" tradition in China not only constructs the hierarchy of a human being's knowing, but (re)produces the power dynamics of authority and control. This is a very different sense of teaching than the one in "On Learning".

Modern China, 1902-1948

Although there were numerous schools across the country through various dynasties in ancient China before the 19th century, almost all of them were open only to the middle and upper social classes, emphasizing learning classical texts in the humanities. There was no formal national schooling system available to all (B. Wang, 2009). The release of the "Royal Law of Schooling" (《钦定学堂章程》) in 1902, and "Legislation of Schooling" (《奏定学堂章程》) in 1903 led not only to the beginning of compulsory education but also to the establishment of a great number of modern grade schools (1-12) in China. The number of modern schools

significantly jumped from 719 to 52,348 during 1903-1909 (Shi & Cui, 2009/1999, 5). With the mandate to provide public schooling, teaching became a major social concern. Furthermore, the abolishment of the imperial examination system in 1905 shifted the narrow focus of education from learning for entrance into bureaucracy into a more comprehensive one including both sciences and humanities. Both the “Royal Law of Schooling” and “Legislation of Schooling” state that “the most important teaching method is narrating”²¹ (C. Wang, 382). All of these events mark the beginning of modern education in China (C. Wang, 2005; B. Wang, 2009).

This modern beginning in the history of education in China was strongly influenced by western pedagogy, especially the works of Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670) and Johann Friedrich Herbart (1776-1841). Their educational works were first popular in Japan and then brought to China by overseas Chinese students and scholars in Japan. Specifically, until recent years in China, the method and practice of classroom teaching derives from Comenius and also from Herbart’s Five Steps.

In his famous “The Great Didactic” (1896/1632), Comenius ambitiously claims, “We venture to promise a GREAT DIDACTIC, that is to say, the whole art of teaching all things to all men, and indeed of teaching them with certainty, so that the result cannot fail to follow” (157, emphasis original). This “art of teaching all things to all men” is the “art” or technique of class teaching: divide a great number of students into classes and each teacher teaches one class using the same text books in each subject and the same method of instruction for all subjects; time and subjects should be carefully divided and then rigidly adhered to, so all students should do the same appointed task at one time. As concluded by Comenius, “In short, as a baker makes a large

²¹ The original Chinese texts are “凡教授之法，以讲解为最要。”

quantity of bread by a single kneading of the dough and a single heating of the oven, as a brick-maker burns many bricks at one time, as a printer prints hundreds of thousands of books from the same set of type, so should a teacher be able to teach a very large number of pupils at once and without the slightest inconvenience” (317).²² Zhang (2000) thinks this class teaching method was driven by the need of efficiency in modern industrial society and thus he critiques its guarantee of no misunderstandings between teacher and student in the transfer of truth along with its extreme focus on efficiency and control.

As Comenius’s method of classroom teaching can make modern schools (re)produce students as quickly and efficiently as modern factories, Herbart’s Five Steps of teaching make teacher’s teaching as mechanical and uniform as modern workers. Herbart believes that one’s reaction to what is offered to sense-perception is always associated with what is already in past experience, so instruction must help students assimilate new perceptions through their total experience, past and present. Wilhelm Rein, a student of Herbart’s student, Tuiskon Ziller, designed a five-step teaching method based upon Herbart’s work:²³ Preparation (prepare student to receive new subject matters); Presentation (present the new subject matters to students); Association (connect and compare the new materials to the old ones); Formulation or Generalization (illustrate the new materials clearly in great details); Application (apply the new subject matters) (Dodd, 1906, 123). Zhang (2008) says since Herbart’s Five Steps were taken by his followers as a rigid teaching order to which every teacher must strictly adhere, this teaching procedure fell into fundamentalist formalism and was later used by or combined with the

²² Comenius was a disciple of Peter Ramus. For more on Ramus, see Triche & McKnight (2004).

²³ The original four step teaching method in Herbart includes Clearness (Analysis and Synthesis), Association, System, Method. Wilhelm Rein, a Herbartian, developed Herbart’s four steps into what is now known as “Herbart’s Five Steps.”

centralized ideology in the Soviet Union and China.

The advent of modern schooling in China, especially under the dominant influences of Comenius's uniformed mode of classroom teaching and Herbart's Five Step teaching method (Shi & Cui, 2009/1999; C. Wang, 2005; B. Wang, 2009) perpetuated teaching-as-narrating. In 1913, the Ministry of Education of People's China called on all middle schools across the country to encourage their teachers to employ narrating as the main teaching method – “Teacher narrates and students take notes”²⁴ (C. Wang, 382). At that time, teaching-as-narrating was taken as the most efficient and easiest way of teaching, and even the *only* feasible or *best* way for large scale teaching in schools.²⁵

After World War I, the educational theory of progressivism became wide spread in China, especially after John Dewey lectured throughout China in 1919-1922. The May Fourth Movement²⁶ also encouraged the developments of different emerging innovative educational theories and practices. As suggested by C. Wang, however, both of these influences had been limited in the circle of educational researchers and a small number of “experimental” schools in several major cities in China such as Beijing and Shanghai—the mode of teaching-as-narrating/telling under the overwhelming influence of Comenius and Herbart still dominated in most grade schools during that time period (46).

²⁴ The original Chinese texts are “教员口讲，学生笔记。”

²⁵ The originator of the “one and the best way” to teach was Peter Ramus. See Triche & McKnight (2004).

²⁶ The May Fourth Movement was a grand intellectual, cultural and political movement in China in the 1920s. Its beginning was marked by the student demonstrations in Beijing on May 4th 1919, protesting the compromise the government made in the “Treaty of Versailles” after the war in which the province of Shandong was transferred from the hands of Germany to Japan. This movement led to a surge of Chinese nationalism and new visions of Chinese traditional culture and western democracy and science. In the history of China, its significance is often compared to the “French Revolution in 1789.”

Contemporary China, from 1949 to the Present

After the communist government of the People's Republic China was founded in 1949, the educational system in China took a sharp turn from learning from the west to learning from or copying the Soviet Union. The theoretical works of Soviet educationist, N. A. Kaiipob (1893-1978), who first constructed a systematic discipline of pedagogy through Marxism, became the dominant force in China from the 1950s to the 1980s. His book of "Pedagogy" was the main text for students in normal universities and colleges. It is reported that this book sold over 500,000 copies in China and almost every Grades 1-12 teacher in the city had one in hand in the 1960s; moreover, the educational faculty in Beijing Normal University even published a book of "Lecture Notes of Pedagogy" in 1956, a well-received book teaching teacher educators how to lecture Kaiipob's book of "Pedagogy" to pre- and in-service teachers (Liu & Lin, 2007). As the formal schooling system in China was experiencing explosive expansion during the 1950s and 1960s, the impact of Kaiipobist pedagogy can be said to be unprecedentedly influential in reaching a great number of practicing teachers in Grade 1-12 schools.

As American teachers worshipped Herbart even more than did German teachers in the end of the 19th century, Chinese teachers worshipped Kaiipob even more than did the Soviet Union teachers in the 1950s (Shi & Cui, 45). The "Kaiipobist Pedagogy" published in 1951-52 in China suggests each class be divided into six time periods based upon Herbart's Five Steps and many schools in China even used six different bell ringings in each class to notify teachers the beginning and end of each time period (Zhang, 2008, 95).²⁷ As Kaiipob argues in his "Pedagogy"

²⁷ The six time periods are preparation (1-2 min.), checking students' homework (3-8 min.), overview of new subject matters (5-10 min.), presentation (10-20 min.), association (10 min.) and giving new homework (5-8 min.). Zhang (2008) says if we add the average time spent in each period together, we will find out this might account for the

book, “Teaching is the teacher’s activity” and “All in-class work and assignments are based upon the teacher’s oral presentation of knowledge,” the perspective of the teacher’s “dominant role” in classroom is then popularized and even becomes a famous slogan in the educational system in China (Yuan, 2003/1998, 62).²⁸ This extreme focus on teacher-centeredness deeply entrenched the tradition of “teaching-as-narrating” in the daily teaching practices of most, if not all, classrooms in China, perhaps accounting for the revered role of teachers in Chinese culture: the teacher as the source of all knowledge.

Now, it is generally acknowledged that the Kaiipobist pedagogy was, in some sense, an integration of Herbart’s “narrating” pedagogy with the ideology of the Soviet Union at that time, specifically Stalinism. C. Wang (2005) directly says there is a natural flow from the pedagogical work of Comenius to Herbart and then to Kaiipob. Zhang (2008) thinks that Chinese educational researchers tried hard in looking for the “best,” “generally good” teaching method that could “guide” and thus “standardize” all teaching practices and they finally came to believe that it is the method of “narrating” that is best (40). He states that the reasons for the predominant influence of Kaiipobist pedagogy in China in the past several decades are complex: first, politically, it accommodated or satisfied the new government’s ideological propaganda; second, culturally, it implicitly echoed the “teaching-as-narrating” tradition of Chinese Legalism or legalized Confucianism; third, it was easy for teachers to follow its instructions as a handy working manual (123). There is a danger that teaching-as-narrating/telling can and does

routine of 45 minutes per class in daily classrooms in China until now.

²⁸ The absolute control by the teacher was legitimized in the Soviet Union in its “Decision of the Syllabus and Teaching Practice in Elementary and Middle Schools” in 1932: “The Party requires that the absolute leading role of teachers must be guaranteed in all schools.... Teachers must systematically and coherently narrate all subject matters” (C. Wang, 378). Consequently this view had a great influence on the educational system in China at that time.

sometimes function as a tool of political propaganda in promoting a particular political ideology.

Furthermore, Zhang says both Kaiipobist pedagogy and the “teaching-as-narrating/telling” tradition in China emphasize the “educational rule”: “Teaching must be Educative” (97). This educative aspect of teaching is different from the meaning of “educative” in Dewey’s “educative experience,” for it implies the shaping of students’ minds through teachers’ telling, not through students’ doings. Zhang thinks one hidden reason why the Chinese government hesitates to limit class size legislatively might be that the bigger the class is, the easier is for the teacher to establish his/her absolute authority and thus to put all students under control and mold their minds (94). In this sense, the problematic of the “teaching-as-narrating” tradition in China is not the employment of it as an educational method as much as it is the implicit control of channeling students’ thoughts and perspectives toward a particular ideology.²⁹

The following quotation describes well the teaching practice of narrating/telling now, in Chinese schools:

Day in and day out, 12 million teachers are teaching the 220 million students in the same way in China – telling students the truth from textbooks. In this schooling system, every student spends 9 or 12 years in this receptive learning and intense training of knowledge and skills. This is the portrait of current teaching reality in China. (Zhang, 2008, 8)

Currently, the average time of “teachers’ narrating, i.e. teachers’ telling from *above* not talking *with* students” occupies over 65% in Grade 1-12 classrooms in China (Shi & Cui, 2009/1999, 175, emphasis original). C. Wang argues this determines the main learning way of students: passively listening to the teacher’s narrating and telling. The implicit rule of “teacher teaches first and then students learn” can be interpreted as “the teacher narrates first and then students

²⁹ For a Chinese view of the similarity between Chinese and American education regarding control, see Tianlong Yu (2004).

listen” (C. Wang, 2005, 378). The separation in time, the “first/then” relationship, seems to suggest that students’ learning depends completely on the teacher’s teaching as the telling of truth. As this dominance of teaching upon learning implies that “no teaching, no learning,” it seems to forget that in the very beginning of history of education in China, “teaching” originated from “learning,” both linguistically and conceptually.

Zhang (2008) explains that in this frame it is assumed the teaching-listening relation cannot generate new knowledge, it can only function to efficiently transfer “the products of knowledge” (6). The essence of a teacher’s “teaching” is to transfer knowledge others have produced while student’s “learning” is to acquire *approved* knowledge. He says this “give-and-receive” relationship between teacher and student has been written into official textbooks for teacher education released by the Ministry of Education, and then widely read by millions of pre- and in-service teachers, thus significantly influencing teaching practices in China.

From the 1980s, after the end of the “Cultural Revolution,” Chinese educational researchers began to critically reflect on the path of learning along which China had walked (C. Wang, 2005; B. Wang, 2009; Zhang, 2008). Since the national curriculum reform started in 2001 in China, more and more attention is shifting from teachers’ teaching to students’ learning to nurture students’ creativity and imagination (Zhu, 2006). Many researchers in education have been aware of and critiqued the limitations of the “teaching-as-narrating/telling” method, currently dominant and still entrenched as a teaching method in most Chinese classrooms, although it is still regarded as the most important teaching method in almost all official texts in normal universities and colleges. While acknowledging the dangers of this method, researchers insist this is not only the oldest and easiest but most efficient, practical and thus widely applied teaching method (Shao, 1997; C. Wang, 2005; Chu & Pan, 2009). Many of these researchers try

to better this teaching method by paying more attention to students' learning; however, in reality, their attempts continue to justify teaching-as-narrating/telling – but recommend doing it *better*.

In “Theories of Curriculum and Instruction” edited by B. Wang (2009), also entitled as the “National Textbook for Elementary Education Majors in Higher Education Institutions,” Yuanhui Zhe and Xinmin Pan claim that “the first and most important thing in the method of teaching-as-narrating is that the teacher must guarantee the rightness of what s/he is teaching – every concept and sentence from the teacher's mouth must be right” (200). As this is the textbook for future elementary school teachers, they also emphasize that “because elementary school students have relatively poor experience, logical thinking and judgmental ability, the teacher should not teach any controversial issues to them” (200). Both above arguments touch on the essence of the method of “teaching-as-narrating/telling”: the mechanical transferring of knowledge/truth from teacher to student in an authoritative top-down relationship. This reminds me of a frequently used phrase or metaphor in Chinese educational literature to describe the act of teaching as “force feeding ducks,” where students are taught in schools like ducks on the farm, forced to swallow what is forced upon them.

Conclusion

When I attended an international conference of education several months ago in Shanghai, I found an interesting phenomena: while American educational researchers criticize the schooling system in their country and look to Chinese schools for hopes, their colleagues in China are idealizing the education in America for possible solutions to the problematics in Chinese education. As I look back to my educational experience, as both teacher and student in both countries, I see, to use William Doll's phrase (2002), the invisible “ghost of control” which

persistently haunts schools not only in the United States but also in China, past and present. This control extends to teachers and students alike, for I felt it in the classrooms when my former educational professor claimed the foremost responsibility of teachers was to “teach truth” to “enlighten” students; I felt it again when I read the stated objectives of knowledge/truth Tracy’s teacher was determined to teach. Reflecting on the Concise Oxford Dictionary definitions of truth and knowledge, I feel compelled to question a tension between truth received from others and the truth that is called knowledge derived from experience. For me this difference calls to question the nature of truth as the opposite of false, a point that Dewey and Parker Palmer make in talking about either/or’s.

This chapter reviewed selected literature critical of teaching-as-telling and of learning-as-being-told in the United States and three major historical influences on teaching that led to the development of teaching-as-narrating, the dominant mode of teaching, in China. Both show that this traditional direct teaching of truth is entrenched in the public school systems in America and China as not only a teaching method but an implicit educational culture. Teaching is thus merely a method to instruct students to gain accepted knowledge or truth. One of the major changes in current teacher education programs in China is the proliferation of “method” courses such as “math methods” and “English methods.” Teaching seems to become more and more a “craft” or “technique” rather than an “art.”

Martin Heidegger (1971/1959) provides a sharp critique of “method”: “The sciences know the way to knowledge by the term ‘method.’ Method, especially in today’s modern scientific thought, is not a mere instrument serving the sciences; rather, it has pressed the sciences into its own service” (74). If as Heidegger says, quoting Nietzsche, there has been a “victory of scientific *method* over sciences” (74, emphasis original), that is, over the scientific

ways of being, then I suggest analogously that teaching as narrating/telling has achieved a victory over education and learning. In other words, teaching becomes strategies and skills while forgetting its essence as *being*. About the *being* of teaching I say more in chapters three and four.

Can learning, as study, as exploration be restored to the prominence it once had? In ancient China? In ancient Greece? Is there another method for teaching besides teaching as narrating/telling? As I have been struggling with these questions, the works of Martin Heidegger help me greatly, especially his phenomenological perspectives on truth and untruth. In the next chapter, I will focus on Heidegger's conceptualizations of teaching and learning, especially his explorations of (un)truth and clearing as unconcealment.

Chapter Three

Heidegger's Concept of Teaching

Why Does Heidegger Interest Me?

Once a whole world listened to him.

-- Bernhard Welte, 1981/1976, 73

The above quotation is from the beginning of Bernhard Welte's speech at Heidegger's burial in 1976. As one of the most influential contemporary philosophers, Heidegger (1889-1976) is the major founder of phenomenology after Edmund Husserl, and his critique of modernity, in some sense, opens the door of post-modern thought. His masterpiece, "Being and Time" in 1927, is one of the most original and influential works in the 20th century's philosophy. Heidegger's phenomenological work has also had great impact on contemporary philosophical movements such as existentialism, hermeneutics, deconstructionism, and post-structuralism. According to Welte, since Heidegger comes from the earth of Messkirch, "his thought has shaken the world and the century" (73).

Thomas Sheehan (1981) has a pithy summary of Heidegger: his thought is "complex but simple," while his life is "simple but complex" (v). It can be said that, in this complexity, the primary or even the only topic of Heidegger's thinking, is "Being."¹ Sheehan states that Aristotle, on whom Heidegger draws extensively, argues overall the defining question of First Philosophy is "What is being-ness of beings?" This "essence" or "X-ness" is not something objective, but "the meaningful relatedness, the intelligible presentness, of things to and for man" (x). It is this

¹ Sheehan says this life-long research focus for Heidegger changes throughout his career – from the question of "the meaning of Being" to "the truth of Being" and then "the *place* of Being" (vii, emphasis original).

disclosive relation between man and beingness that Heidegger tries to retrieve from the ancient Greek philosophy and presses him to ask the phenomenological question, “What is the Being of beingness?” In asking this question, Heidegger wishes to move beyond the traditional philosophical question, “What is the essence of beings?” to ask, “What is the essence of essence?” In the very beginning of his “Being and Time,” Heidegger (1962/1927) tackles this “darkest” question of “Being” and says we have to face this question despite its indefinability. Since Being is not an entity, he says, “Looking at something, understanding and conceiving it, choosing, access to it – all these ways of behaving are constitutive for our inquiry, and therefore are modes of Being for those particular entities which we, the inquirers, are ourselves” (26-27). Here Being is neither something “out there” as traditional beingness of beings to be discovered nor creations of humans; rather, it is the presence or happening of the world opened by the inquirers as ourselves. In this sense, Heidegger argues Being is the unconcealment of truth in his phenomenological work.

As Heidegger (1992/1925) argues that the essence of phenomenological investigations is that “they cannot be reviewed summarily but must in each case be rehearsed and *repeated* anew” (p. 26), he spends his whole life in this “*work of laying open and letting be seen*” (86, emphasis original). According to him, “Any further synopsis which merely summarizes the contents of this work would thus be, phenomenologically speaking, a misunderstanding” (26). Furthermore, Heidegger explains the word of “investigation” which means not to “simply pull out results and integrate them into a system” but “to implicate the reader into pressing further and working through the matters under investigations” (26). All of these beautiful and powerful accounts of phenomenology really strike me.

This Heideggerian sense of “phenomenological investigation” is what I am looking

forward to in my search for alternatives to traditional didactic teaching. Although this teaching as “telling and being told” has already been reviewed, critiqued and given suggestions of change by a great number of educational scholars, I investigate this issue again not to just “pull out results and integrate them into a system” but to get *anew* this question through bridging western phenomenology and the eastern philosophy of Chinese Taoism. Specifically, I am looking for the not-yet possibilities of alternative ways and perspectives of teaching through the resonance among (1) Heidegger’s struggle between truth and untruth, (2) Lao Tzu’s conceptualization and practice of inaction, and (3) Dewey’s critique of traditional direct teaching.

I realize that many curriculum scholars do not wrestle with truth, certainly not in its purity, and do not see the teacher’s role as the authoritative transmitter of truth. So why do I go back to truth and untruth in Heidegger? First of all, although Heidegger has not produced major writings specifically in teaching and learning, his assertion that questioning functions as “the piety of thought” contributes to our understanding of teaching. In “A Letter to A Young Student” (1971/1950), he states, “I can provide no credentials for what I have said – which, indeed, you do not ask of me – that would permit a convenient check in each case whether what I say agrees with ‘reality’” (186). Therefore, instead of trying to provide any big “convenient check” as established truth corresponding to the “reality,” Heidegger only offers small “changes” that can be inserted into the fixed system to turn or expose it inside out, to critically examine what has been covered up before. Using these small changes to challenge big checks, Heidegger tries to compel us “to think, to question what we ‘normally’ do not question” by “his strange use of familiar words, his seemingly perverse etymologies, his deceptively simple gnomic sentences, his repetitions and staccato rhythms” in “dis-rupt[ing] and dis-turb[ing] ‘normal’ argumentative philosophic discourse” (Berstein, 1992, 93-94).

Another reason that Heidegger interests me is that he establishes an essential unity between (un)truth and education. In his lecture, *Plato's Doctrine of Truth* (1998/1931, 32),² Heidegger traces the significant change of the essence of truth in Plato's cave allegory. This change affected the history of Western thinking, including its concept of education. For Heidegger, "the essence of 'education' is grounded in the essence of 'truth'" (170). The exploration of this original and profound sense of truth sheds light on that of education, especially teaching.

Heidegger's exploration of truth and untruth goes beyond binary opposition reaching deeper into the complex dynamics between these two, especially shown in his radical statement, "in essence, truth is untruth" (1993/1936, 179). In other words, it is not merely that "mistakes can also be good for we can learn from them," or "failure is the mother of success"; rather, Heidegger goes further to argue that untruth can never be equated with so called mistakes or errors while he tries to revive a more fundamental, primordial sense of truth rather than truth as merely "correctness." He (1971/1950) asserts, "Everything here is the path of responding that examines as it listens. Any path always risks going astray, leading astray... Stay on the path, in genuine need, and learn the craft of thinking, unswerving, yet erring" (186). This intricate quote from Heidegger implies the potential dangers as the seemingly absolute objective truth is shaken by untruth. The following brief introduction of Heidegger's personal life history might help in understand his philosophical ideas in a more situated way.

² This is a gift Heidegger dedicates to his father's 80th birthday (2008, *Letters to His Wife*, 135). Heidegger's *Letters to His Wife* is written in the years from 1915-1970, collected in a book by his granddaughter, Gertrud Heidegger, issued in 2008.

Heidegger's Personal Life History

As one of the most thought-provoking thinkers and philosophers in the 20th century, Heidegger's career and life are marked with many controversies and rumors, compliments and critiques. One reason for this Heidegger myth is that he did not like biographers. There is a well-known story about Heidegger's introduction of Aristotle in a lecture: "He was born, he worked, he died." I hope the following narratives of his life history will not oversimplify the perplexities of his life.³

Martin Heidegger was born on the 26th of September 1889, as the son of a master cooper and sexton in Messkirch, Germany. In 1903, he left the local citizens' school to attend the humanist grammar school and the Catholic seminary in Constance.⁴ He went to the Berthold Gymnasium in Freiburg in 1906 receiving a scholarship. Heidegger (1981) recalls in his "A Recollection" that between 1903 and 1909, he enjoyed "fruitful learning under excellent teachers of the Greek, Latin, and German languages" and acquired "everything that was to be of lasting value" (21). In 1907 he received a 220-page treatise, "On the Several Senses of Being in Aristotle" by Franz Brentano in 1862, from his fatherly friend, Father Grober. He said this text helplessly stirred in him the quest for the meaning of Being which remained "through many upsets, wanderings, and perplexities, *the* ceaseless impetus for the treatise *Being and Time* which appeared two decades later" (1981, 21, emphasis original). Financially supported by the Church,

³ Personally, I find these perplexities bothersome: not only questions of his anti-Semitism, but also his treatment of women, friends and teacher.

⁴ Heidegger (2008) described himself in his childhood as "a simple boy, living with modest, pious people in the country; ... who savoured all the wonderful poetry open to a sexton's son, lay for hours up in the church tower & gazed after the swifts & dreamt his way over the dark pine forests; who rummaged about in the dusty old books in the church loft & felt like a king among the piles of books which he did not understand but every one of which he knew & reverentially loved" (5).

Heidegger began to study Catholic theology⁵ and philosophy in Freiburg in 1909. As his parents hoped for a priest, he chose to become a philosopher and left the seminary in 1911.⁶ But he continued his studies and received a doctoral degree in 1913, and then taught at Freiburg University on transcendental philosophy in 1915-16. Heidegger said, this teaching position meant to him “much, much more than an office, a position within society, a career” for it was “a priesthood, something to which only the ‘ordained’ may gain entry” (2008, 6).

Heidegger began to read Edmund Husserl’s “Logical Investigations” from the first semester at the university especially when he knew Husserl was a student of Brentano and expected to get help from him on the question of Being evoked by Brentano’s dissertation. Heidegger described his meeting with Husserl in 1917 as “one episode in a process that comes to me largely out of the darkness & leads on into the darkness” as he tried to climb his *own* philosophical mountain (2008, 33). Sheehan (1981) says in reading the “transcendental” Husserl in “Ideas” and the “realist” Husserl in “Logical Investigations,” Heidegger realized that he needed to go beyond Husserl, to develop his own phenomenological way. In one letter to his wife in 1919, Heidegger wrote, “I’m already certainly beyond him [Husserl] & with much broader horizons & problems” (2008, 62). In 1920, Heidegger became the private assistant of Edmund Husserl in Freiburg. This collaborative relationship brought Heidegger out as Husserl’s favorite student and colleague. In the 1920s, Husserl even said to Heidegger, “You and I are

⁵ Born into a Catholic family, Heidegger was raised up through “an ultra-Catholic education,” but after he grew up he began to complain the “Catholic system’s inner lack of freedom,” especially after he married his protestant wife, Elfriede Petri, in 1917 (2008, 50). Later, he even claimed that “I’m ‘officially’ Catholic, I’m inwardly Protestant” (114).

⁶ Heidegger (2008) said at that time he struggled to “win the right to live purely on knowledge, to make his mother believe that the philosopher too can achieve great things for men & their eternal happiness – how often did she ask her son, ‘what is philosophy, do tell me,’ & he couldn’t give an answer himself” (5).

phenomenology” (quoted in Sheehan, 7). In 1927, Heidegger’s masterpiece, “Being and Time” (*Sein und Zeit*) was published in Husserl’s “Annual for Philosophy and Phenomenological Research.” Husserl recommended Heidegger to be his successor in the chair of philosophy in Freiburg in 1928. In the same year, Heidegger wrote “On the Essence of Ground” as a contribution to honor Husserl on his 70th birthday.⁷

In April of 1933, Heidegger was elected as rector of Freiburg University. In May, both Heidegger and his wife⁸ joined the National Socialist party. Although Heidegger resigned in February 1934, the hectic ten month rectorship became the target sharply critiqued by his opponents. Apparently in the 1930s Heidegger had deep faith in Hitler and his National Socialist party to renew the forces and lead the future of not just Germany but the West.⁹ What is seen as more unforgivable in Heidegger is his silence on the horrible crimes of the Nazis and holocaust after 1945. After the war, Heidegger was banned from teaching from 1946 until 1950. After the 1940s, he became strongly focused on his philosophical thinking and been allowed to teach. Then he offered seminars and lectures not only in Germany but in both Europe and North America. During this time period, both language and the essence of modern technology were among his primary topics of research. On 26th May 1976, Heidegger died at home.

⁷ Regarding his later break with Husserl in the 1930s, Heidegger (1981) says in the *Spiegel* interview, that he does not know what led Husserl to oppose his thought in public and denies there is anything of this related to Husserl being Jewish. He also clarifies two rumors: he never forbade Husserl’s use of the university library and his dedication to Husserl in the fifth edition of “Being and Time” was taken off under pressure from the publisher.

⁸ Throughout her whole life, Elfriede never changes her nationalistic and anti-Semitic perspectives.

⁹ In his inaugural speech of “The Self-Assertion of the German Universities,” Heidegger (1965/1933) directly claims that “The Fuhrer himself, and only he, is the current and future reality of Germany, and his word is your law” (28). Later in his address at the election meeting of German Scholars in Leipzig, Heidegger (1965/1933) states again that “The National Socialist Revolution is not simply the taking of power in the state by one party from another, but brings a complete revolution of our German existence” (32).

Complexities and Contradictions of Heidegger's Associations with Nazis

Not until 1966 when Heidegger was interviewed by the German news weekly, *Der Spiegel*, did he finally give a detailed explanation on his 1933-34 period. This interview was later published five days after his death in 1976, as he requested it not be published while he was alive. In the *Spiegel* interview, Heidegger (1981/1966) said before his rectorate, he was “in no way politically active” (46). He recalled that in April 1933, the ex-rector von Mollendorf, on the day of his dismissal for forbidding anti-Jewish posters in the university, said, “Heidegger, now you must take over the rectorate” (46). Besides von Mollendorf, many of his young colleagues also urged him to apply for the position in the interest of the university. As for what he said of the “Führer,” Heidegger explained that after he took over the rectorate he’s clear that he “would not survive without compromises” (49). He said, he forbade the notorious book-burning in the university and tried to protect his Jewish colleagues such as professor Thannhauser and von Hevesy and students such as Helene Weiss. He felt sad that not a word was commented on his resignation as there were so many on his assumption of the rectorate. After the resignation, Heidegger said he completely focused on his own teaching. His successor at that time of resignation was announced as “The First National Socialist Rector of the University.” Heidegger reported that then not only was he watched by the party, but his publications were not allowed to even be reviewed. In 1944, as 500 scientists and artists were freed of any war service, Heidegger was put in the “completely expendable” faculty group by the rector and called up to build fortifications (54).

When I read through the numerous critiques and analyses of Heidegger’s complicit relation with the Nazis, two of most impressive ones to me are Emmanuel Levinas and Richard Bernstein. Levinas (1998) thinks Heidegger’s ontology of understanding Being consists in

“going beyond [particular] being... and perceiving it upon the *horizon of being*,” and thus Heidegger “rejoins the great tradition of Western philosophy: to understand particular being is already to place oneself beyond the particular” (5, emphasis original). He sees Heidegger continuing Western philosophy’s primacy of the Same over the Other. For Levinas, the Other lies in the heart of his ethics. Furthermore, Levinas argues our relation with the Other exceeds the confines of understanding. For Levinas, there is no preexisting horizon in our encounter with the Other as in Heidegger’s ontology. In other words, Levinas thinks the Other defies any rational appropriation in ontology. Therefore, he critiques that Heidegger’s focus on ontology at the expense of ethics allows him to cooperate with the Nazis and be silent regarding their atrocities.

Bernstein (1992) reports that there is a missing passage in Heidegger’s manuscript of “The Question Concerning Technology” from the published text: “Agriculture is now motorized food industry – in essence the same as the manufacturing of corpses in gas chambers and extermination camps, the same as blockading and starving of nations, then as the manufacture of hydrogen bombs” (130). Bernstein then questions whether “in essence” there is no significant difference between motorized agriculture and the genocide of Jews. Bernstein quotes Habermas that “Under the leveling gaze of the philosopher of Being even the extermination of Jews seems merely an event equivalent to many others. Annihilations of Jews, expulsion of Germans – they amount to the same” (133). Bernstein thinks the real danger of Heidegger’s thinking is that it “*anesthetizes* us to the frightful contingencies of human life and death” (133, emphasis original) – it only concerns the “response to the silent call of Being, not to the silent screams of our fellow human beings” (134). This, in some sense, echoes Levinas’s critique of Heidegger’s ontology.

Concerning the critiques from Levinas and Bernstein on Heidegger’s philosophy, especially his ontology, I think both of them are right that it is this slippery sense of ethics in

Heidegger's thoughts that leads to his association with Nazis and his being unable to confront their horrible crimes. The following texts from his letter to his wife in March 1933, just before he became the rector and joined the party, might help with an understanding of his later decisions. Heidegger (2008) wrote in the letter, "I mustn't allow a type of action that is 'political' in the narrow sense somehow to become the yardstick for philosophical action ... Precisely in this respect Jas [Karl Jaspers] ¹⁰ thinks too much in terms of 'humanity'" (142). Here his contempt of the "humanity" in Jaspers seems to suggest his later silence to the terrible crimes committed by the Nazis to the Jews. I suggest that part of this silence or mistake of Heidegger comes from his own misjudgment or untruth, not completely from his philosophy. As an extremely original thinker and philosopher, Heidegger was actually not politically "active" except for that short-term rectorate. Throughout his whole life, Heidegger took philosophical thinking as the first priority. That he saw them as separate led to many critiques.

In his "Why Do I Stay in the Provinces?" published only one month after his resignation in 1934, Heidegger said after he left Freiburg and withdrew to his cabin, he enjoyed the solitude in the country as the world of the city ran "the risk of falling into a destructive error" (1981, 29). After his ban on teaching was removed in 1950, he wrote to his wife that he would only maintain a loose connection to the university and "for the rest to stay entirely away from everything; for otherwise I'll always be used for something or other in some way or other, & substantive interests & tasks will no longer carry any weight at all" (2008, 216). This "apolitical" turn in Heidegger especially after his rectorship shows that he regretted being used in politics. As Heidegger (2008) realizes, "much untruth is involved" in his own life (254), he thinks this erring

¹⁰ A German philosopher who was banned from teaching and publication during the war as his wife was Jewish.

accompanied his searching for truth on the path of his thinking. This does not mean his erring can be excused, but as he argues, in the complex relationship between truth and untruth, great thinkers also err greatly.

Heidegger's "Let Learn" through "Always-Being-in-the-World"

Before exploring Heidegger's phenomenological perspective on truth, I will explore his thoughts on teaching and learning, specifically his concept of "let learn" through "always-being-in-the-world." "What Calls for Thinking" (1993/1951-52) is one of the few of Heidegger's works focusing on teaching and learning. In it, Heidegger claims that the role of teaching is being in relation with the world. What can be learned are not chunks of knowledge or information that can be added to our previous knowing; rather what can be learned is our being related to the world in which we live. For Heidegger (1992/1925), "knowing is always a mode of being of *Dasein* on the basis of its already being involved with the world" (161). Here, two of the most important key words in Heidegger's theoretical framework appear, "*Dasein*" and "world." According to Heidegger, *Dasein* is human being, not as subject, but as openness to the world in which beings can disclose themselves. In other words, both being and *Dasein* are verbs, not nouns. *Dasein* does not reveal or describe the hidden essence of being but is the complex of defining relations and potentials of being. Furthermore, he explains that "*Dasein* is the entity which *I myself am in each instance*, in whose being I as an entity 'have an interest' or share, an entity which is in each instance *to be* it in my own way" (152-153, emphasis original). In this sense, *Dasein* is constituted by its ways to be in each particular moment. Heidegger has a wonderful metaphor to describe the complex relation between *Dasein* and world in which he compares *Dasein* to a snail in its shell.

Its [the snail's] act of crawling out is but a local modification of its already-being-in-the-world. Even when it is in its shell, its being is being-outside, rightly understood. It is not in its shell like water in the glass, for it has the inside of its shell as a world which it pushes against and touches, in which it wars itself, and the like... The snail is not at the outset only in its shell and not yet in the world, a world described as standing over against it, an opposition which it broaches by first crawling out. It crawls out only insofar as its being is already to be in a world. It does not first add a world to itself by touching. Rather, it touches because its being means nothing other than to be in a world. (166)

In this sense, as suggested by Heidegger, *Dasein* is not self-contained but “rather absorbed in dealing with the matters at hand concretely and practically” (30). It is in this absorption that *Dasein* uncovers the world and at the same time this active involvement of *Dasein* is often forgotten by people. As the “self-containment expressed in Descartes’s postulate *ego cogito ergo sum* asserts both the primacy of the transcendental ego as absolute consciousness intact from the taint of involvement with external objects and existence as prior to all such involvement,” Heidegger (2002/1945) claims that *Dasein* shows its fundamental condition of being absorbed in the world and “its concern with the here and now” (34). In brief, Heidegger thinks “*Dasein* is to show itself as being-in-the-world” (156). This “being-in-the-world” is, in essence, “being-with(in)-the-world.” Besides, Heidegger (1998/1928) points out “World never is, but *worlds*” (126, emphasis original).

Since the world is never a non-changing object standing against us, this being-in-the-world is actually being-in-relation – being involved, engaged, “lingering with and letting oneself be affected” (Heidegger, 1992/1925, 159). This awareness of being-in-the-world or being-in-relation is important in teaching and learning. By raising the example of the teaching of a cabinetmaker to his apprentice, Heidegger argues that the learning of the apprentice does not merely lie in practicing the use of tools or gaining knowledge of the forms of things he will build, but responding to the different kinds of wood “as it enters into man’s dwelling with all the

hidden riches of its essence” because “this relatedness to wood is what maintains the whole craft” or “the craft will never be anything but empty busywork, any occupation with it will be determined exclusively by business concerns” (379). In other words, unless one can develop this intimate relation to what one learns, one can hardly get into genuine learning. Using the words of my high school teacher on poetry, the aim of teaching poetry is not to make students write beautiful lines but to let them know a poetic way of living in this world. As Heidegger (1993/1936) argues, “Teaching is a giving, an offering; but what is offered in teaching is not the learnable” (275); teaching, in some sense, is to give or offer students more ways of relating to the world they live in.

This being-in-relation does not only mean the relation between the act and content of teaching or learning but also the relation between teaching and learning. While Heidegger (1993/1951-52) states “what teaching calls for is this: to let learn” (379-380), he (1993/1936) says,

Teaching therefore does not mean anything else than to let the others learn, that is, to bring one another to learning. Teaching is more difficult than learning; for only he who can truly learn – and only as long as he can do it – can truly teach... In all teaching the teacher learns the most. (275-276)

In this sense, teaching is not the determination of learning but letting learning happen – the teacher is not the dictator but helper or facilitator of his students. This is why Heidegger (1993/1951-52) writes that “The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices” (380). While the teacher learns through teaching, students also can teach through learning. This is quite different from the traditional logic of “the teacher teaches and then students learn.” Next I introduce his conceptualizations of truth and untruth through which traditional direct teaching can be questioned.

What Is Truth?

Is truth merely the empty sophistry of a conceptual game, or is it an abyss?
–Heidegger, 1993/1936, 176

“What is truth” is a difficult but important question for all philosophers, and Heidegger is no exception. In the lecture “On the Essence of Truth,” Heidegger (1998/1930) first traces the traditional concepts of truth, including material truth and propositional truth. The former truth is the “consonance [*Einstimmigkeit*] of a matter with what is supposed in advance regarding it,” and the latter is the “accordance of what is meant in the statement with the matter” (138). For example, if a nugget of gold conforms to our *definition* of genuine gold, “this is genuine gold” is a material truth. On the other hand, if our statement “this is genuine gold” conforms to the *standard* of genuine gold, this statement is a propositional truth. So, Heidegger summarizes that traditional truth is the “correspondence [*Angleichung*] of the matter to knowledge” or “knowledge to the matter” – truth as “a conforming to ... [*Sichrichtennach*...]” or “correctness [*Richtigkeit*]” (138). In this sense, truth can be taken as correct or true “knowledge.” He then points out that this definition of truth needs no further proof than a self-sufficient reason.

Interesting questions revolve around issues of “untruth” as either incorrectness or nonaccordance outside the essence of truth. It is from the assumption of propositional truth as correctness of representation and from untruth as the non-essence of truth that Heidegger begins to dis-rupt the traditional concept of truth – “truth is not so much a property of knowing but is rather *a character of the being of Dasein itself*” (1992/1925, 167, emphasis original). For Heidegger, the essence of Being is not the concealed core of being as a noun, but is tied up in the act of be-ing as a verb. Gregory Fried (2000) points out that, truth, according to Heidegger, is more of “an ongoing *happening* in which *Dasein* is free for its possibilities” (50, emphasis

original). This, however, does not mean that truth is of our making or handiwork: “we could not even presuppose that there already is manifest something to which we can conform ourselves, unless the unconcealment of beings had already exposed us to, placed us in that cleared realm in which every being stands for us and from which it withdraws” (Heidegger, 1993/1936, 177). In this sense, truth is engagement with, and discloser of, being. As *Dasein* lets beings be, Heidegger warns, it can also let them not be themselves.

Untruth: Opposite of Truth or Another Profound Truth?

The opposite of a true statement is a false statement, but the opposite of a profound truth can be another profound truth.

--Niels Bohr, in Palmer, 1998, 194

In Heidegger’s (1993/1936) phenomenological perspective of truth, untruth is not simply the opposite of truth, but “the reservoir of the not-yet-revealed, the un-uncovered, in the sense of concealment” (185). There is a critical turn in Heidegger’s thoughts on truth: in his early discourse on truth, especially in “Being and Time,” truth is taken as the unconcealment of Being; but in his later works such as “On the Essence of Truth,” it is “haunted by a sub-discourse on untruth” (Sallis, 1999, 29). Sallis points out in Heidegger’s later discourse on truth, untruth not only *belongs* to truth but is *older* than truth which means “an ordering that would exceed all the words by which it has been named in the history of metaphysics” (29). Untruth as this excess and “reserve of concealment.... withholds the essence of truth from the demand for self-showing” (29). In this sense, untruth cannot be easily equated with so called mistakes or errors that have to be corrected. On the contrary, untruth coexists with truth so intimately that there is *always some concealment of untruth in the seemingly unshakeable truth* and vice versa. Heidegger (1998/1930) explains, “If the essence of truth is not exhausted by the correctness of statement, then neither

can untruth be equated with the incorrectness of judgments” (147). More radically, Heidegger (1993/1936) claims: “In essence, truth is untruth,” because

the essence of truth, that is, of unconcealment, is dominated throughout by a denial. Yet this denial is not an effect or a fault, as though truth were an unalloyed unconcealment that has rid itself of everything concealed. If truth could accomplish this, it would no longer be itself. This denial, in the form of a double concealment, belongs to the essence of truth as unconcealment. Truth, in its essence, is un-truth. (179)

This statement of truth as untruth is quite different from our common assumption of truth as what is right and untruth what is wrong. Heidegger here announces the impossibility of ultimate truth, “an unalloyed unconcealment that has rid itself of everything concealed.” In other words, as the denial of truth, untruth mixes with truth inseparably. This directly challenges the role of the teacher: what can be taught and learned in our classrooms besides the nonexistent pure truth? If we cannot teach our students directly what is right and wrong as truth and falsity, what will be the point of our teaching, or how can we deal with the untruth in our teaching? Thus, the necessity of *en-teaching* emerges. *En-teaching* requires us as teachers not to directly transfer or force any absolute truth to or upon students for right answers. But it does not mean non-teaching. It teaches by undoing, clearing, caring and conversing to help not only students but teachers to see truth through the lens of untruth and untruth through the lens of truth.

If truth, as Descartes asserts, is built up, layer by layer, from the foundation of the thinking subject (and “subject” itself means ground), truth as un-truth or un-truth as truth in Heidegger has surpassed the established fixed boundary of truth as correspondence into an ongoing path of truth as becoming and happening as advent.¹¹ In this sense, to teach is not

¹¹ Heidegger (1993/1936) thinks, “The critical concepts of truth which, since Descartes, start out from truth as certainty, are merely variations of the definition of truth as correctness” (177).

merely to teach or transfer preestablished truth. This reminds me of a recent discussion I had in my elementary teacher education class. When we discussed whether ethics could be *taught* to students, one student raised the issue that we can do that by *telling* our students directly what is right and wrong. Then I shared with them a story I observed in a fourth grade reading class in the United States. In that reading class, the teacher and students read a story together as was common practice. The story took place in a Japan zoo, where the staff had to make the difficult decision as to who would euthanize two elephants before the World War II bombing of the city in case the elephants broke loose in a stampede. The details of the struggle of both the staff in making the hard decision and the elephants, which tried every means to escape and finally died with tears, were so touching to the class that most of the students could not help stopping their tears at the death of the elephants. One little girl sobbed, “Oh, how evil those bomb droppers are! I hate them! If it were not for them, the elephants would not need to die!”

In fact, that story happened in Japan before the end of World War II. At that time, I found I could not keep silent as a Chinese visitor who knows that period of history. I raised my hand and the teacher nicely gave me time and a chance to speak about the historical context of that story, in which almost one third of the families in China lost some dear family members in the 1937 invasion by Japan and how Japan refused to end the war in 1945. I tried my best to tell all this in a way understandable to those students. That is one of the classes I will never forget: we expressed our sympathy for not only the elephants and people in Japan, but also for the victims in China; we discussed whether bombing was the best way to force Japan to end the war, what we could do if we were hurt by the other, whether violence is the right response to oppose violence. We touched on many issues in our discussions which went far beyond the question of the right or wrong of putting the elephants to death.

As I related this discussion to my elementary teacher education students, we asked, “Did my interjection go too far for students of such a young age? Should we, as teachers, tell students clearly the seemingly black and white on ethical issues? Are there any basics of ethics for people to follow in our society which we should establish in the minds of our students first?” As in the discussion with the fourth graders, I listened carefully to the hot debates which went on during most of the class with my elementary teacher education students. Even after class, some students came to me, “Jie, I still think I cannot agree with that point in our discussion.” Actually I do not have the so called right answers to all those meaningful but difficult questions: I do not have that absolute truth to teach them what they should do in those occasions. But one thing I am sure of is that, although we did not reach a final conclusion, we all learned from the discussions. It is in this constantly honing process between truth and untruth that genuine learning occurs – “He who thinks greatly must err greatly” (Heidegger, 1971/1947, 9). This naturally brings us back to Heidegger’s own “errings.” When Heidegger is not welcomed at the University and banned from teaching in 1946, one of the most difficult time periods for him, he writes to his wife that,

You ask about the meaning of the final stanza of ‘The Daily Work of Thinking’: ‘err uncommonly’ – the ‘uncommonly’ is deliberately ambiguous; first, it means: not common; the errancy [*die Irre*] is nothing usual or even just negative; it’s the essential possibility of truth as unconcealment. Where there is concealment, there’s the possibility of errancy (as in my Truth lecture); then it means: as suspect: unusually great – the more man thinks, the greater the possibility of errancy – for the one thinking it is uncommon as such –
 These are the errant [*Be-irrtten*] in the proper sense, while the ‘unerring’ [*Unbeirrbaren*] are those who close their minds to truth & defy it in their uprising into a groundless self-assurance. (2008, 194, emphasis original)

Here I really appreciate Heidegger’s nice and neat interpretation of the double meanings of “err uncommonly.” First, as errancy, or so called error or mistake, is not merely negative, it points to the essence of truth as untruth in the complex interaction between concealment and

unconcealment. Secondly, to err is not just a shame, but in essence it involves great opportunity and at the same time challenge or even danger on the pathway of thinking. In other words, no errancy, no truth and no thinking. Or, it can be even said that errancy is the glory of great thinking. This is why Heidegger ascribes the characteristics of “unerring” to those who are close minded. I believe Heidegger is not trying to find excuses for his own errings, but is encouraging people to not be afraid of erring for great thinking.

Truth, Untruth and Education

The “[cave] allegory” not only illustrates the essence of education but at the same time opens our eyes to a transformation in the essence of truth.

Heidegger, 1998/1931, 32, 167

From now on this characterization of the essence of truth as the correctness of both representation and assertion becomes normative for the whole of Western thinking.

Heidegger, 1998/1931, 32, 178

“Plato’s Doctrine of Truth” (1998/1931-32) is one of Heidegger’s major works pondering upon the essence of truth along with that of education. Iain Thomson (2002) suggests this lecture be translated as “Plato’s Teaching of Truth” to preserve Heidegger’s reference to teaching and the title’s dual implications that 1) education is grounded in (the history of) truth, and 2) Plato’s doctrine of truth obscures truth’s more primordial meaning (p. 135). In that lecture, Heidegger presents Plato’s famous allegory of cave which, he says, marks “a change in what determines the essence of truth” (155). Heidegger says truth originally means “unhiddenness,” “a wresting away in each case, in the form of a revealing” (171). In that cave allegory, however, Heidegger writes,

The movement of passage from one place to the other consists in the process whereby the gaze becomes more correct. Everything depends on the correctness of the gaze. Through this correctness, seeing or knowing becomes something

correct so that in the end it looks directly at the highest idea and fixes itself in this 'direct alignment.' In so directing itself, apprehending conforms itself to what is to be seen: the 'visible form' of the being. (177)

In Plato's cave story, while people in the cave gradually ascend to the ground, they are making *progress* and getting more and more of a correct view of the world. When they finally see that brilliant sun, they are thought to be able to see the truest image of the world, or the world itself. Moreover, in this process, Plato says thinking goes "beyond" the things in the form of shadows or images and thus "out toward" things as "ideas." Heidegger argues that this *progress view* in the cave allegory results in "an agreement of the act of knowing with the thing itself" – "a transformation in the essence of truth" in which truth becomes the "correctness of apprehending and asserting" (177). In the people's struggling passage in the underground cave, the next higher place of destination is always truer than current and previous ones. In other words, truth always gains dominance over untruth, light over darkness. As untruth comes under the yoke of truth in this movement of passage, Heidegger thinks, "The essence of truth gives up its fundamental trait of unhiddenness" (176). He claims, ever since Plato, "there has been a striving for 'truth' in the sense of the correctness of the gaze and the correctness of its direction" and "what matters in all our fundamental orientations toward beings is the achieving of a correct view of the ideas" (179). This relinquishes the essence of truth as unhiddenness or revealing for all the following years of history. It moves truth toward a predetermined reality.

In this sense, Heidegger (2002/1945) argues, "Since Plato there has been a *fatal relocation of truth* away from concrete things themselves as they naturally show and reveal themselves in the richness of our vernaculars toward the idea of the exchange of equivalents" (36, emphasis original). This exchange, Heidegger says, requires a *common denominator or standard measure* so that equivalence can be established. In this exchange, the "core" or "essence" of

beings is preserved while differences are effaced through abstraction, generalization, and reduction; therefore, truth becomes “the abstract, one-sided, and fragmented truth of general equivalence” (36).

Heidegger (1998/1931, 32) asserts this significant change of the essence of truth in Plato’s cave allegory significantly affects the conceptualization of education in the history of Western thinking as “the essence of ‘education’ is grounded in the essence of ‘truth’” (170). He says *paideia* in the ancient Greek means essentially a movement of passage, the “process whereby the human essence is reoriented and accustomed to the region assigned to it at each point” (166). Since *paideia* means a “turning around” in Plato’s cave allegory, Heidegger argues that therefore “the fulfillment of the essence of ‘education’ can be achieved only in the region of, and on the basis of, the most unhidden, i.e., the truest, truth in the proper sense” (170). This shift in understanding the essence of truth has caused the mutation of *paideia*, to a passage into schooling as the “calculated swift, massive distribution of ununderstood information to as many as possible in the shortest possible time” (Heidegger, in Cooper, 2002, 57). David Cooper (2002) says the information is “ununderstood” because Plato is “without appreciation either of the status of the information – as belonging to just this or that particular way in which things are revealed – or of the possibility of, and the conditions for, access to the types of information he gathers” (57). In this sense, *paideia* as education becomes the ascending passage leading students toward the pursuit (and acquisition) of truth as the correct (re)presentation of objects or highest ideas. Therefore, truth loses its original meaning of becoming in unhiddenness and its relation of “always-being-in-the-world” through the unconcealment of *Dasein*.

Light and Darkness: Sun and Star

But may one hand me,
Full of dark light
The sweet-scented cup

-- Holderlin, in Heidegger, 1976/1958, 56

In Plato's cave allegory, the aim is always to see/know more clearly, in more light of the truth of Sun. Untruth, since the time of Plato, is under the yoke or control of truth, as described in the cave story, Heidegger disagrees that the distinction or difference between truth and untruth is similar to that between light and darkness. On the contrary, he thinks the seeming contradictions of light and darkness always unite and abide like life and death. In "Principles of Thinking" (1976/1958), Heidegger argues that the concealment in the darkness is the "secret mystery" of light (*Lichten*)¹² – "The dark keeps what is light in its presence; what is light belongs to it" (56). Then Heidegger quotes the above lines from Holderlin's poem, "Andenken," to demonstrate this intricate play between light and darkness that exists in all thinking. Furthermore, he says, if light is merely brightness, light would be no longer *Lichtung*¹³ as it is "brighter than one thousand suns" (56). Heidegger cites from "Tao Te Ching,"

Lao Tzu says (chapter 17): 'one aware of his brightness keeps to the dark.' To that we add the truth that everyone knows but few realize. Mortal thinking must descend into the dark of the depths of the well if it is to view the stars by day. It is harder to preserve the clearness of the dark than to produce a brightness which would seem to shine as brightness only. What would seemingly only shine does not illuminate. (56)

My understanding of the above quotation is that since truth and untruth are so intermixed with each other, if truth is taken as absolute objective Truth with untruth as the opposite side of mistake or error, the brilliant Truth becomes "merely brightness" or even "brighter than one

¹² In German, *Lichen* also means "to empty out" or "to raise up."

¹³ *Lichtung* means "lightening" or "clearing."

thousand suns.” This metaphor of the intricate play between light and darkness particularly attracts me, for I think it does not mean to simply invert the binary of (un)truth, i.e. relocating the source of truth to darkness, but suggests something happening, not something already existing, in the dark being (un)revealed. The darkness of untruth, which is actually much richer than the brightening area of truth, thus becomes only dead dark. Dewey (1958/1925) would take this as a great pity as the result of that shining Truth, for he thinks, “the realm of meanings is wider than that of true-and-false meanings; it is more urgent and more fertile” – “Poetic meanings, moral meanings, a large part of the goods of life are matters of richness and freedom of meanings, rather than of truth; a large part of our life is carried on in a realm of meanings to which truth and falsity as such are irrelevant” (411).

I suggest this opaque realm of poetic meanings in Dewey, which can be hardly lightened through by the radiant sun of Truth, resides in the dynamic of darkness. I love Heidegger’s poetic saying of descending “into the dark of the depths of the well if it [mortal thinking] is to view the stars by day.” At the same time, since presently we are so fond of expanding the lightening area of Truth into darkness, I wonder how we can “preserve the clearness of the dark,” rather than “produce a brightness which would seem to shine as brightness only.” Is it possible for the truth to give light rather than shine? Can we still poetically dwell in that peaceful darkness? Or how can we see those lovely stars in the dazzling daylight of Truth?

When he talks about truth, Heidegger (2002/1945) once tells a story of mapping and journey. He says when we think of error [*Irrnis*] as wandering [*verirren*], it implies truth as traversing “the distance between the two termini of idea and thing” (38). He then compares rational thought to taking a walk, which sees its destination before it begins and does not allow straying [*verirren*]. Heidegger writes,

Philosophy's early form, the Socratic dialogue, is even then resistant to a totally logical mapping, for it meanders around, tells myths, takes detours... Refusing to abandon his homeland of Athens, he [Socrates] yet was a stranger in his own land, while his student's student, Aristotle the Stagyrte, was a metic, a settled outsider who made foreign Athens his home. Where Socrates [Plato?] would ostracize foreign poetry (and rhetoric) from his Republic, Aristotle, tutor to Alexander the builder of empires, maps a mighty domain in which all human knowledge [*Wissen*] is parceled out its inhabitants. The inclusive empire, which claims all know terrain for itself, leaves no one out, not even barbarian rhetoric or poetry, which now is civilized and made subject to the higher *scientiae* of dialectic and politics. Socrates' sense of place, whether inside the city-state or outside it, fades in the Aristotelian empire of knowledge, for all places are now within, and the totality of space must become all the space that is. (38-39)

When I read this story, two vivid images immediately emerge in my mind: one is the barefoot Socrates running, meandering and straying on the fields happily and freely, and the other is the serious, prudent and careful Aristotle untiringly expanding, calculating and measuring his mighty empire. For Socrates, every place in his journey is different with a different feel, smell and taste of air, river, grass, flower and soil; for Aristotle, however, every place is just the same marker on the map with a different size and shape – each is the same without essential difference.

As Heidegger appreciates the wandering of Socrates and critiques Aristotle in this fascinating story, it reminds me of another story of mapping and journey told by Gregory Bateson on his personal website.¹⁴ It involves a pretty girl who liked to sleep on disused railroad tracks and a brutal surveyor who ran the trains up and down the tracks in some country. The surveyor was interested in exploring each branch of the railroad system so that he could mark them on his maps that the girl was often disturbed in her sleep and compelled to retreat hastily while a powerful and smelly engine dashed over the very place where she had been happily resting. The surveyor insisted that it was his right – even his duty – to map the railroad system,

¹⁴ Bateson says this story is quoted from Stewart Brand on the *CoEvolution Quarterly*, Spring 1978, 44-46, <http://www.oikos.org/batallegory.htm>.

and that the whole system was entirely his, including even its unexplored parts. He argued that the system was a single, entirely logical-causal network of tracks. The girl averred that the tracks were designed for the rest and peace of the human soul and she cared nothing for his dreams of causality and logic. Once he had mapped every detail of the tracks along which he ran his engines, she continually found other parts of the system not yet mapped.

Like that surveyor trying to mechanically measure each inch of all the fields, now we are trying to intrude into, and thus shine, all darkness with our torches of “philosophy,” “science,” and “technology.” Will there be any dark place left for the girl’s sweet sleep? If one day the girl can find nowhere to escape from the logical-causal network of the surveyor, that is the tragedy for all people, not only for that girl or the man. Jean-Francois Lyotard (1997/1979) tells the final result of this mapping in quoting another story of map from Jorge Borges: the desire of an emperor to have “a perfectly accurate map of the empire” leads to the ruin of the country as its entire population is totally devoted to cartography (55). Lyotard asserts this demonstrates the failure of “the idea (or ideology) of perfect control over a system” (55). I suggest that it can be also taken as the failure of *pure* truth, “a perfectly accurate map” of the reality/world.

When I try to think about what will be the result of such violent or ruthless lighting which shines but does not give light, one joke or parable I have heard before suddenly comes to my mind. One evening, an old lady saw a man nervously looking for something under a street light. She then came to ask him, “What are you looking for? What can I do to help?” The man replied gratefully, “Thank you! I am looking for my keys.” “But there is no key on the ground here. Why don’t you look anywhere else?” “Because there is no light beyond the streetlight. How can I see in the darkness?” I laughed loudly when I first heard this joke. But now I cannot even smile at it. It shows how silly it is that we expect truth and answers to be in the very small part of the world

that we are privileged enough to think we can see and measure and understand, our unwillingness to acknowledge the vast space of “darkness,” what we do not know and cannot measure.

“How can I see in the darkness” is not a simple or naïve question. For Heidegger, as “the origin of the principles of thinking, the place of the thinking that posits them,” this darkness is not “pitch blackness as the complete, sheer absence of light” but “secret mystery of what is light” (55-56). Therefore, he claims that we must learn to “recognize the dark as the ineluctable and to keep at a distance those prejudices which destroy the lofty sway of the dark” (56). While we are so accustomed to the shining light of Truth, which is “brighter than one thousand suns,” and thus see and think the world under this dazzling light, we have forgotten how to protect the purity of the darkness to “view the stars by day.” Even worse, are we in some sense becoming blind in that strongly shining Truth? It might be a big step forward for us to get from the chaotic darkness into the daylight of Truth/knowledge/knowing, but now the critical question with which we are confronted is, how can we “step back” (using one of Heidegger’s favorite phrases) to appreciate the richness of the concealed beauty in darkness? Or can we see the stars in the daylight? Is there a middle space between darkness and light?

The Intricate Play between Brightness and Darkness in Clearings

The shining of the clearing is in itself simultaneously a self-veiling – and is in this sense what is darkest.

-- Heidegger, in May, 1996, 32

As people walk through the forest, the first thing they need to do, Heidegger says, is to make an open place in the woods free of trees. This openness in the midst of beings is a clearing. Heidegger (1993/1966) says this word of clearing, *Lichtung*, in old German language, can be

traced back to the verb, *lichten*, and adjective, *licht*, which is as same as the word, “light.” Therefore, Heidegger thinks clearing also means to lighten something – to “make it light, free and open” (441). He writes,

What is light in the sense of being free and open has nothing in common with the adjective ‘light’ which means ‘bright,’ neither linguistically nor materially. This is to be observed for the difference between clearing and light. Still it is possible that a material relation between the two exists. Light can stream into the clearing, into its openness, and let brightness play with darkness in it. But light never first creates the clearing. Rather, light presupposes it. (441-442)

Here again we see the “clear” distinction between light and bright along with the intertwined relationship between brightness and darkness in Heidegger when he explains one of the most important keywords in his conceptual framework, “clearing.” Just imagine when one walks into the deep forest in night with a lantern, the beams of light suddenly illuminate the area around the lantern, a clearing thus emerges. But this clearing of open region is not the creation of the light from that lantern. Light operates through clearing, not vice versa. Light brings much more than merely brightening which only shines. Shadows always go with light as brightness plays with darkness in the clearing.

Heidegger critiques that “philosophy knows nothing of the clearing” although it “does speak about the light of reason” (443). I think he is suggesting that philosophy does not know the intricate play between brightness and darkness in the clearing. Through “the light of reason” from our own lantern of philosophy and/or later science and technology, we are very confident that we can have the right and clear vision of everything in the dazzling brightness of the clearing. We even believe that the ever expanding light could one day reach and cover every corner of the forest in the night. This reminds me of one story from “The Classic of Mountains and Seas,” one of the oldest books of folklore and fairy stories in ancient China with a history of

over 2,300 years (Birrell, 1999). In that story, a man named “Kua Fu” hates darkness in night and determines to chase the sun to catch it so that he can fix the sun in the sky in both day and night. He spends his whole life chasing after the sun and dies of the extreme heat of sunshine. As Kua Fu is teased in this seemingly silly story of chasing the sun, are we in some sense just like him in our unceasing pursuit to improve our lantern in the hope that one day it could permanently keep off the darkness in night? Few can understand that darkness is as important as, or even more important than, light for the coming of clearings.

When I read Heidegger’s phrase of brightness as “brighter than one thousand suns,” I cannot help thinking of the image of the extremely shining atomic bombing in Hiroshima. After quoting two of most startling arguments of “To know is to kill” and “Man is the wolf of science” from French philosopher Michel Serres, William Doll (2010) says what is really devastating about this bombing is not its quantity of destruction, however great it was, but “the rational (“good”) reasons given for its occurrence,” and then he critiques “a new sense of power: a power to create and a power to destroy” that man has acquired after World War II (6-7). In this sense, without the wisdom of keeping or protecting the “purity of darkness,” we cannot be aware of the implicit huge danger under the brightness of light. When we are complacent enough to announce that we can see and thus know, through the beams of light, like Kua Fu, we try to put our lantern high up in the sky as the ever shining sun. Then the lantern [of knowledge] becomes a deadly weapon which shines more than just bright light and, as argued by Serres, kills.

As stated in the beginning quote of this section, Heidegger visions the clearing as the brightest and at the same time darkest area under the beams of light. In other words, the clearing is free for both the bright and the dark. Here, I want to take one step further to discuss the play between brightness as truth and darkness as untruth, in the clearing of thinking. While Heidegger

says only this clearing “grants and guarantees to us humans a passage to those beings that we ourselves are not, and access to be being that we ourselves are,” he (1993/1936) admits, “yet a being can be concealed, as well, only within the sphere of what is cleared” (178). Clearing here is a metaphor of the open place that we build in the forest by clearing trees for our travels. Without this clearing, we cannot make wood paths through the forest for new destinations.

The openness in the clearing, however, does not guarantee the unconcealment of truth. Concealment also occurs in what is cleared: “the open place in the midst of beings, the clearing, is never a rigid stage with a permanently raised curtain on which the play of beings runs its course. Rather, the clearing happens only as this double concealment [of truth]” (180). This means that clearing is not merely erasing or destroying untruth for the construction of truth. When clearing unconceals, it also conceals the fact that it conceals and this is really a “double concealment.” In other words, when we clear, think, discover and make conclusions, beings are unconcealed, and at the same time concealed in the clearings – truth and untruth mix with each other in the clearing. This is why Heidegger claims that “Clearing of openness and establishment in the open region belong together” as “the same single essence of the happening of truth” (186).

Heidegger presents an example of such happening of truth in his lecture, “The Origin of the Work of Art” (1993/1936). One main reason for him to choose art to show the unconcealment of truth in the clearing is that usually art is associated with beauty or aesthetics and truth with logic, but he argues, on the contrary, the essence of art is “*a becoming and happening of truth*” (196, emphasis original).¹⁵ In this sense, Heidegger thinks that beauty is one of the ways “in which truth essentially occurs as unconcealment” (181). Art as the disclosure of

¹⁵ Heidegger (1999/1935) thinks, “The history of the essence of Western art corresponds to the change in the essence of truth” (206).

truth is not because art is an imitation or description of particular actual things, but because it opens up an open region, the clearing of beings. As the truth of beings sets itself to work in art, Heidegger writes,

The establishing of truth in the work is the bringing forth of a being such as never was before and will never come to be again. The bringing forth places this being in the open region in such a way that what is to be brought forth first clears the openness of the open regions into which it comes forth. Where this bringing forth expressly brings the openness of beings, or truth, that which is brought forth is a work. Creation is such a bringing forth. (187)

Heidegger explains this clearing “makes space for that spaciousness” which especially means to “liberate the free space of the open region and to establish it in its structure” (170). It is in the open space opened by clearing in which the work of art thus can erect up a world for people. And art discloses what *is* in truth in setting up such a world. In short, Heidegger thinks “It is due to art’s poetic essence that, in the midst of beings, art breaks open an open place, in whose openness everything is other than usual.” (197). In this sense, Heidegger compares art to poetry, both of which let truth happen and unfold unconcealment in the open region – “in the midst of beings, the open region brings beings to shine and ring out” (197). Moreover, he states, this happening of truth comes neither from things at hand, the ordinary, nor from aimless imaginings of whimsicalities, but from “the openness that makes its advent in *throwness* is *projected*” (196, emphasis added).

As suggested by the translator of this lecture, Heidegger here presents two fundamental existential characteristics of *Dasein*: as *Dasein* is thrown or cast in what it is, it is also projected toward its possibilities as possibilities. Standing before any painting by a great artist, what opens people is not just the depiction of any actual thing in the painting, but something *beyond* projected in the clearings of open region by *Dasein* in its own ways in that moment. This is why

Heidegger says, “The work makes public something other than itself; it manifests something other; it is an allegory” (145).

Compared with art, Heidegger critiques that by contrast, “science is not an original happening of truth, but always the cultivation of a domain of truth already opened, specifically by apprehending and confirming that which shows itself to be possibly and necessarily correct within that field” (187). This makes me think of two different modes of teaching, teaching as science and teaching as art. In teaching as science, no real clearing or opening of the open region occurs, for students only need to apprehend and confirm what is shown to them in the form of already opened truth. But teaching as art must let truth originate for according to Heidegger, art is “the spring that leaps to the truth of beings in the work” (202).

Furthermore, Heidegger argues that in the advent of the happening of truth in art, “the artist remains inconsequential as compared with the work, almost like a passageway that destroys itself in the creative process for the work to emerge” (166). This means it is not the artist who makes the work, although s/he does make it, but the work makes the artist. In teaching as art, can it be said that it is the teaching that makes the teacher, the one who teaches to help students’ learning, not the teacher who conducts the teaching? It is through the teaching that students come to the emergence of truth in their own ways as they are at the same time *thrown into* and *projected outward* by the unhiddenness or unconcealment of beings. Then genuine learning happens. As Heidegger (1993/1951,52) says, “To learn means to make everything we do answer to whatever essentials address us at a given time” (380); teaching, unlike instructing, means to let learn, to present evocative work to students for their critical responses.

Conclusion

It can be said that truth is one of the most important issues in Heidegger's lifelong work, especially between 1927 and 1943. During that period, "the question of truth assumes the greatest urgency in Heidegger's thought and comes to determine most powerfully and most transparently the itinerary of that thought" (Sallis, 1999, 20). As Being is the fundamental concern throughout his life, Heidegger argues in "Being and Time" that, "Being (not entities) is something which 'there is' only in so far as truth is" because "Being and truth 'are' equiprimordially" (272). He argues the essence of Being is not the concealed core of being but is the happenings of unconcealment of truth.

During my struggle with the question of truth related to teaching, reading Heidegger's phenomenological works, especially those on (un)truth and clearing, became a great help. This chapter first explains why Heidegger interests me in my inquiry project on "*en*-teaching," and introduces his personal life history to contextualize our understandings of his theoretical works, including the complexities and contradictions of his associations with Nazis. Then I discuss Heidegger's concept of "let learn" through "always-being-in-the-world," and finally focus on his complex exploration of (un)truth, an intricate play between brightness and darkness in clearings. In the next chapter, I will go further to explore my notion of *en*-teaching based upon Heidegger's thoughts of teaching and learning with insights from Lao Tzu and Dewey.

Chapter Four

En-Teaching: A Powerful Pedagogy

The ironist ... takes the unit of persuasion to be a vocabulary rather than a proposition. Her method is redescription rather than inference. Ironists specialize in redescribing ranges of objects or events in partially neologistic jargon, in the hopes that by the time she is finished using old words in new senses, not to mention introducing brand new words, people will no longer ask questions phrased in the old words.

– Richard Rorty, 1989, 78

Building upon Heidegger's notions of teaching and learning, especially his work on (un)truth, in this chapter I develop further the notion of *en-teaching*, with additional insights from Lao Tzu and John Dewey, well recognized in the US and China as an educational reformer, one who railed against teaching-as-telling. Heidegger's ideas about thinking and language, especially his work after "Being and Time" (1927) from the 1930s to 1970s, can be aligned with Taoist philosophy in many ways. Heidegger is often regarded as "the only Western philosopher who not only thoroughly intellectually understands but has intuitively grasped Taoist thought" (Chang, 1974, 138), perhaps owing to his Japanese students at the University of Marburg and the University of Freiburg. The striking similarity between Heidegger's works and Taoist thought has gained attention of Heideggerian scholars (Stambaugh, 1984; Parkes, 1987; Poggeler, 1987).¹

When I explored Heidegger's phenomenological perspective on (un)truth for insights into taken-for-granted assumptions about education and the purposes of teaching and learning, I noticed a strong resonance between his notion of "clearing" and the essential spirit of Taoism, "the Tao of inaction." Following Rorty's ironist suggestion that a new vocabulary is needed to shift us from our old ways of thinking – as Heidegger himself was known for imbuing old words

¹ For more on the parallel between Heidegger's thoughts and Taoism, see "Heidegger and Asian Thought" (1987) edited by Parkes.

with new senses and coining or appropriating words – I proffer the *neologism*, “*en-teaching*.” Drawing on Heidegger’s insights in regard to language, Rorty was well aware, in making the statement above, of the habitual ways in which we use language, how language shapes thought, and how meaning – and our thinking – shifts over time. The prefix *en-* was chosen for three main reasons. First of all, it implies a transformative change from nouns to verbs. As suggested in words such as “enact,” “encode,” and “encourage,” *en-teaching* focuses on teaching as a verb, a dynamic, lived, interactive process. While “teaching” as a gerund implies the teacher’s teaching behavior, *en-teaching* focuses on what makes a teacher, as s/he relates to students. In other words, while “teaching” indicates “the teacher teaches,” *en-teaching* suggests “it is teaching that makes the teacher... more *teachable*.”² Therefore, *en-teaching* is enticing, endowing, enabling, engaging, enjoying and enchanting.

Second, although the prefix *en-* in English often means “to make into, to put into, to get into” as in the words “encompass,” “enwrap,” and “envelope,” what *en-teaching* tries to enter is not a fixed system which “enframes”³ – a key word Heidegger uses to critique the essence of modern technology – but a dynamic relation, “being with the world.” According to Heidegger (1992/1925), *Dasein* is not self-contained but rather absorbed in the world it encounters concretely and practically: *Dasein* shows itself “as being with the world” (156). This echoes the “collectivist turn” Jurgen Habermas (1991) points out in Heidegger: *Dasein* becomes “no longer this poor Kierkegaardian-Sartrean individual hanging in the air, in *Sorge*” but “the *Dasein* of the people, of the *Volk*” (189). In this sense, this “being with the world” is always “being in

² This refers back to Heidegger’s argument (1993/1951, 52), “The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices” (380), as discussed in the chapter three.

³ Heidegger says the root of the word “technology” in ancient Greek is *Techne*, referring not only to activities and skills of craftsman but also those of fine arts. In other words, it “does not at all lie in making and manipulating, nor in the using of means, but rather in the revealing” (1993/1949, 319). However, Heidegger thinks this revealing in modern technology becomes “Ge-stell” [enframing] and thus totally different from art (210).

relation,” not just with the people in the world, but in a world that “worlds.” Since *en-teaching* entwines, enmeshes and entangles as a relational process, it does not encapsulate, enclose or enforce. In other words, *en-teaching* opens up rather than closes down.

Third, the hyphen in *en-teaching* suggests both the rupture and relation between *en-teaching* and teaching – a dynamic and generative space full of tensions. Rather than suggesting an opposition of teaching, passively not teaching, this view of teaching opens up as a phenomenological way of being in the classroom described by *en-teaching* and has significant implications not only for relations in the classroom including students’ relationships with content and knowing, but also for curriculum.

Throughout this chapter, I will insert boxes of *conversations*⁴ among Heidegger, Lao Tzu and Dewey, as well as others, to illustrate the rich and dynamical interactions among them which point to the not-yet possibilities of *en-teaching*. While trying to juxtapose the complex thoughts of the three great thinkers through conversations, I do not want to conflate them, especially the dissonance of the different cultural and philosophical traditions respectively from which they come. I suggest the simple comparisons among the three thinkers are impossible. Drawing on Heidegger’s critique of modern technology and his analysis of the nature of language, I see *en-teaching* as a “non-willing,”⁵ a refusal of the will to control; and I develop the concept (*en-teaching*) as a resonance among Heidegger, Lao Tsu, and Dewey, involving: (1) a clearing between truth and untruth, (2) the call of the Way of Tao as waying, (3) “wait[ing] in silent readiness,” and (4) the “noiseless ringing of stillness.” I include Dewey in the conversations with Heidegger and Lao Tzu to explore the implications of *en-teaching* in

⁴ All sayings in the conversation boxes are direct quotations from the referenced sources; but no quotation mark is inserted to interrupt the flow in conversations. All quotations from Lao Tzu’s “Tao Te Ching” are translated by me except for one that is referenced as translated by Mair.

⁵ Heidegger (1966/1944, 45) says thinking, understood as re-presenting, is willing – “to think is to will and to will is to think” (59). He argues we thus want “non-willing” which means “weaning ourselves from willing” (60).

classrooms, to form a pedagogical bridging between Eastern and Western thoughts through a bridge “which is not a bridge” (Aoki, 2005, 228). Dewey’s two year experience of lecturing in China, his long-term relationships with Chinese scholars and philosophers in both America and China, qualifies him function in this capacity.

En-Teaching as Clearing between Truth and Untruth

Problematizing truth as it relates to what and why we should teach complicates how we consider the teaching-learning relationship. As discussed in the previous chapter, Heidegger argues truth is essentially untruth and vice versa, for both are (un)concealments of being – the two coexist and intermix with each other like light and darkness. This echoes Dewey’s argument

Heidegger: *Truth, in its essence, is untruth. (1993/1936, 179)*

Dewey: *Any logic which identified the technique of knowing with demonstration of truths already possessed by the mind, blunts the spirit of investigation and confines the mind within the circle of traditional learning. (1965/1948, 33)*

Lao Tzu: *He has to know he does not know. (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 71)*

of truth as “true *if*: if certain other things eventually present themselves; and when these latter things occur they in turn suggest further possibilities; the operation of doubt-inquiry-finding recurs” (1958, 154-155, emphasis original). This quality is a fundamental but an easily forgotten characteristic of truth. If the teacher is blind to this “if” quality of truth, teaching becomes simply telling.

How can the teacher teach, if as suggested by Lao Tzu, “he does not know”? In other words, can the teacher *en-teach*, adopting an attitude of being-in-relation, if he does not possess truth? This question is, in essence, the same as Heidegger’s questioning of how to “view the stars by day” in a deep well. This metaphor of the well is much akin to another of Heidegger’s metaphors – that of the jug as a clearing, an opening in which truth happens. Heidegger takes the essence of jug or the jugness of jug in terms of its voidness rather than its material construction.

As the voidness of the jug lets it hold fluid, thus making it a jug, the deep holeness of the well allows the spring of water to flow into it, thus making it a well. The essence of well as opening, therefore, lies in its “is” as a rift, in its being as emptiness. This emphasis on the “voidness,” “emptiness” or “the sheer ‘not’ of beings” (1993/1936, 196) in the Heideggerian truth is echoed in Taoism: Lao Tzu argues that Tao is “empty, yet never refills with use” (1990/500 B.C., 62). Not coincidentally, Lao Tzu uses the same metaphor of the emptiness of the jug in his “Tao Te Ching” written about 2,500 years ago:

Thirty spokes converge on a single hub,
But it is in the space where there is nothing
That the usefulness of the cart lies.
Clay is molded to make a pot,
But it is in the space where there is nothing
That the usefulness of the clay pot lies.
Cut out doors and windows to make a room,
But it is in the spaces where there is nothing
That the usefulness of room lies.
Therefore,
Benefit may be derived from something,
But it is in nothing that we find usefulness.
(Chap. 11, translated by Mair, 1990/500 B.C., 70)

Both Heidegger and Lao Tzu agree here that it is the “not” of being that constitutes the essence of beings – presence derives from absence, establishment from clearing, something from nothing. Heidegger adds that nothingness as clearing is “more *in* being than *are* beings”: “This open center is therefore not surrounded by beings; rather, the clearing center itself encircles all that is, as does the nothing, which we scarcely know” (178, emphasis added). Since the open space of the clearing can accommodate everything “as does the nothing,” it is neither merely a quick deconstructive process of erasing or swiping away untruth from truth nor a sharp beam of dazzling light, which is “brighter than one thousand suns,” to try to “enlighten” the whole forest, but the reopening of openings toward new possibilities, i.e. making holes *in* beings.

This emphasis on the “emptiness” or “voidness,” i.e. the “not” of beings, is unusual from a Western perspective, where it seems, Nature abhors a vacuum.⁶ In China, however, reference to emptiness is quite common. One of the oldest Chinese sayings is “Teacher must first have a full bucket of water of knowledge and then s/he can fill in students’ small cups.” This is still a widely used slogan for teachers, especially in teacher education programs in China. Here students are taken as empty vessels but in a sense different from the meaning of “empty” in Lao Tzu and Heidegger. In the former, the state of “empty” is measured by that of “full” and thus “emptiness” is regarded as a negative state that needs to be finished, i.e. “filled,” as soon as possible. In other words, “voidness” is not recognized and valued as “the primary condition of growth” as Dewey argues. The “void” immaturity, according to Dewey, is, “emptiness” of students in school. If the teacher aims to “help” students to overcome this immaturity by filling their empty cups full from his/her own bucket, two results are striking: students will have the same water as their teacher’s and their cups will be always smaller than the teacher’s bucket. Growth will always be *less*.

Heidegger: *Nothing is the characteristic [Kennzeichnung] of Being. (quoted in May, 21)*

Dewey: *The primary condition of growth is immaturity....But the prefix “im” of the word immaturity means something positive, not a mere void or lack. (1916, 41)*

Lao Tzu: *Being and nonbeing constitute each other (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 2)*

The “voidness” of the well, like the immaturity of students, is not “emptiness.” As the well gets the spring of water from the deep earth through its “empty” hole to the ground, its “emptiness” or “voidness” is generative in a lived manner, a condition of its being a well. Similarly students have their deep earth not only in their school lives with peers, but at home and in their community, especially under the powerful influence of mass media in a rapidly changing society. On the other hand, as argued by Lao Tzu, “Being and nonbeing constitute each other”;

⁶ This commonly heard idiom is attributed Baruch Spinoza (2008/1667), proposition 15, in his *Ethics*, Part I, Concerning God.

the “fullness” of the teacher’s bucket is not really “full.” No bucket or jug can keep the same water fresh for a long time. As one traditional Chinese phrase says, “running water is never stale”: any subject material viewed as the water of truth has to be constantly refreshed or cleared.

Therefore, *en-teaching* encourages both teachers and students to recognize and value “holes” whose “voidness” or “emptiness” allows them to search for new possibilities of what is not yet. The “holes” in students, as “immaturities,” are their potentials to be carefully nourished but not directed or channeled. Dewey (1966/1916) asserts that if the “voidness” of students’ immaturities are treated positively, they would “tell a different tale” from the teacher’s telling (42). This reminds me of one recent conversation with my four-year-old daughter: “Tracy, why do you paint this girl’s cheeks in blue in your drawing? Girls should have a pretty pink face.” “No, blue is as pretty as pink.” “Have you ever seen any blue face in girls?” “Of course.” “Oh boy, who?” “Avatar.”⁷ How often have students been told by their teachers, what they “should/must” and “should/must not” do in their lives? If this teaching-as-telling becomes successful, everybody in each generation will tell the same story without any surprise. If nobody can paint blue people, how can “Avatar” be created? In this sense, *en-teaching* is a clearing space which “encircles all that is, as does the nothing”⁸ – it accommodates and encourages students’ lived imagination and creativity, activating potentials in the “voidness” of their immaturities to cultivate future innovative scientists, poets, writers, artists, and even statesmen.

Nurturing the “holes” in students also calls teachers, borrowing Heidegger’s phrase, to “step back” to their own “holes” – a precious opportunity for teachers to develop their potentials. One of the most valuable suggestions I have received in teaching is from my major professor who tells me that, as he steps into the classroom at the beginning of each class, he asks himself,

⁷ A movie released in 2009 which tells of an imaginary planet. Its residents are blue and called “Avatar.”

⁸ For Heidegger’s understanding of clearing, refer to chapter three.

“What can I learn from my students today?” Once teachers ask this question of themselves, they become “empty” or “cleared” for the advent of the happening of truth. This echoes the saying in Chap. 7 of the “Tao Te Ching,” translated by Heidegger in one of his letters to a Chinese philosopher: “The sage empties his self and his self is preserved. Is this so because he has thought of self? Because of this he is able to fulfill himself” (in Hsiao, 1987, 99). It is this emptiness/clearing of the sage’s self that allows the dynamic fulfilling to come.

When we know that we do not know (Socrates’s greatest virtue), knowing and not-knowing constitute each other. This is also the secret to “Keeping Knowledge Alive.”⁹ Furthermore, possibilities for new explorations are recognized in this interactive and corresponsive flow between the “holes” of students and teachers as they question subjects and subjectivities. As Lao Tzu argues that “All beings come from nothingness” (Ch. 40), I suggest genuine teaching and learning stem from the generative “holes” in students, teachers and subject materials as clearings of “emptiness” or “voidness.” For Heidegger (1971/1959), this clearing in the sense of “to clear a way” means to “form a way and, forming it, to keep it ready” – it does not mean to move things up or down on a prescribed path but “to bring the way” (129-130). In other words, clearing is way-making or more specifically waying, a key word in not only Heidegger’s phenomenological work, but also Lao Tzu’s Taoist thoughts.

En-Teaching as Responding to the Call of the Way of Tao as Waying

In many versions of the translation of “Tao Te Ching” by Lao Tzu, the word “Tao” is translated as “way.” This is not surprising because the original meaning of the Chinese character, 道 (Tao), is the way or path on which people walk. It is not a coincidence that Heidegger

⁹ “Keeping Knowledge Alive” is the title of Doll’s journal article in 2005.

(2002/1945) adopts the metaphor of path/way, which he uses so often in his works, as being “the guiding principle” of his thought (32). Through his collaboration with a Chinese philosopher in translating “Tao Te Ching” in 1946, specifically its eight chapters concerning “Tao,” he acquired a deeper understanding of “Tao” as “way” than other Western scholars. In his 1957 lecture, “The Principle of Identity,” Heidegger regards “the Greek *logos* and Chinese *tao* as untranslatable guiding words of thinking” (in Poggeler, 51). He further explains in “The Nature of Language” (1971/1959) that “The key word in Laotse’s¹⁰ poetic thinking is Tao, which ‘properly speaking’ means way,” “the way that gives all ways” as “*a great hidden stream* which moves all things along and makes way for everything” – “All is way” (92, emphasis added). In this sense, Tao is the originary way that calls for and gives way. Heidegger (1981) thinks humans must listen to this “call of the pathway” for it “awakens a sense which loves the free and open” (72). Here the word of “the” in “the way” of Tao does not imply that there is only “one and best” way but the great underlying force of *calling for* ways, *giving* ways and *making* ways. How does *en*-teaching respond to the call of the way of Tao?

Before addressing this question, I would like first to analyze Heidegger’s (1993/1951-52) interpretation of “call”:

We are now supposed to use the word ‘to call’ in a signification that one might paraphrase approximately with the verbs summon, demand, instruct, direct. We call on someone who is in our way to give way, to make room. But the ‘call’ does not necessarily imply demand, still less command; it rather implies an anticipatory reaching out for something that is reached by our call, through our calling. In the widest sense, ‘to call’ means to set in motion, to get something under way – which may be done in a gentle and therefore unobtrusive manner, and in fact is most readily done that way. In the New Testament, Matthew 8:18, we read *Videns autem Jesus turbas multas circum se, iussit ire trans fretum*. [‘But seeing a large crowd about him, Jesus ‘commanded’ them to go across the sea.’] Luther translates, *Und da Jesus viel Volks um sich sah, hiess er hinuber jenseit des Meeres fahren*. [‘And when Jesus saw many people around him he called them to

¹⁰ The name of Lao Tzu is also often translated as Laotse, Laotzu, or Lao Zi.

go over across the sea.’] To call [*heissen*] here corresponds to the Latin *iubere* of the Vulgate, which properly means to wish that something might happen. Jesus ‘called’ them to go over: he did not give a command or issue an order. What *heissen* in this passage means comes to light more clearly if we keep to the older version of the Gospel. Here we read, *Idon de ho Iesous ochlon peri auton ekeleusin apelthein eis to peran* [‘Seeing a large crowd around him, Jesus called to them to go to the other side’]. The Greek verb *keleuein* properly means to get something on the road, to get it under way. The Greek noun *keleuthos* means way. And that the old word ‘to call’ means not so much a command as a letting-reach, that therefore the ‘call’ has an assonance of helpfulness and complaisance, is shown by the fact that the same word in Sanskrit means something like ‘to invite.’ (386-387)

This is an unusual understanding of *call*, not in the sense of “demand,” “command” or “instruct.” Instead, it suggests the possible “reaching out” on the way. Heidegger says (1971/1959), “The way is such, it lets us reach what concerns and summons us” – it lets us reach “what reaches out for us by touching us, by being our concern” (91). Notice here that what way calls us to reach is not what is in our way, but what has already touched us and thus concerns us. In other words, this calling is an inviting. As Jesus invites rather than commands, lets or allows people to go over the sea, he shows an example of *en-teaching*. While teaching-as-telling claims to guide and instruct students in a process of elevation from the deep darkness of the underground to the ground above, illuminated by the Sun of Truth, *en-teaching* steps back to invite students to reach out for what intrinsically summons them on their own way. This “stepping back” is not to passively retreat, but to “give way” to students. Heidegger interprets the phrase “give way” as “the original giver and founder of ways” (92): only the teacher’s way-giving can yield possibilities to students’ way-making while the essence of the Way of Tao is waying. Not coincidentally, *en-teaching* echoes the ancient meaning of the word “curriculum.” Its Latin root of “*currere*”¹¹ is understood not in its

¹¹ At the end of his presentation paper in the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, William Pinar (1975) states that the method of *currere* in education lets us try to “generalize on the basis of the stories we tell and the ones we hear others tell, taking them as evidence of a sort, and attempt to formulate in general terms the broad outlines of past, present and future, the nature of our experience, and specially our educational experience, that is the way we can understand our present in the way that allows us to move on, more learned, more evolved than before.”

modern meaning as a static running track as a noun, but as the verb form of ways on which people are running (Grumet, 1976, 36). The essence of *currere* lies in its waying as a verb – curriculum as a lived process of way-giving and way-making.

In giving way, *en-teaching* is mindful not to force the way upon students – “The way is never to be prescribed for the individual – or for the student” (Greene, 1967, 106). As suggested in the conversation box, when confronted with different ways motivated by the undercurrents of the Way of Tao, one has to walk on his/her own way, but this chosen path is, only a way, rather than *the* way or “shelter.” In Heidegger’s book of *Holzwege* (“Woodpath”), a collection of his major essays between the 1930s and 1940s, he writes in the Foreword that “In the wood are paths that mostly

Heidegger: Being and Time is a **way** and not a shelter. Whoever cannot walk should not take refuge in it. A way, not ‘the’ way, which ever exists. (in Parkes, 106, emphasis original)

Dewey: The **ways** in which we believe and expect have a tremendous affect upon what we believe and expect. (1958, 14, emphasis original)

Lao Tzu: Tao/Way can never be rationalized. (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 1)

Greene: This is **my way**; where is yours?” –thus I answered those who asked me “the way.” For **the way**—that does not exist. (1967, 106, emphasis original)

wind until they end quite suddenly in an impenetrable thicket. They are called ‘woodpaths.’ Each goes its peculiar way, but in the same forest” (quoted in Krell, 1993, 34). David Krell, the editor of *Holzwege*, says that the French translators of *Holzwege* call it “ways that lead nowhere” and then argues that the woodpath does lead somewhere which however can never be predicted or controlled, since the way is made my walking.

Ways or paths wind in the wood according to its trees. The same way-giving offered by *en-teaching* in what is cleared can lead to different way-makings in students. As noted, Greene responds to those who ask her “the way” that “This is *my way*; where is yours?” Since “the way” does not exist, everyone including both teacher and student has to find his/her own walking way.

This challenges those practicing *en-teaching* to be open and accommodating to the emergence of different modes of way-makings and ways. Both teachers and students are always walking on their particular ways which appear “at every juncture in a different light, with a different tone, and stimulates different interpretations” (Heidegger, 1981, 21). For Heidegger (1971/1959), on the way means to “put oneself on a journey, to experience” and thus “to learn” (143). This echoes Dewey’s focus on “experience” in education, that the “experience” is, in essence, the process of experiencing.

Experience is one of the most important key words in Dewey’s theoretical framework and appears frequently in his works. As stated in the conversation box, he takes experiencing as a

Heidegger: *To experience something means to attain it along the way, by going on a way. To undergo an experience with something means that this something, which we reach along the way in order to attain it, itself pertains to us, meets and makes its appeal to us, in that it transforms us into itself. (1971/1959, 73-74)*

Dewey: *The esthetic or undergoing phase of experience is receptive. It involves **surrender**. (1934, 53, emphasis added)*

Lao Tzu: *Tao/Way grows all beings. (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 51)*

dynamic process of plunging into, undergoing, suffering, absorbing and being absorbed into. In this plunging into, we learn not only more about that into which we plunge, but also more about ourselves. We emerge from this plunging into, the undergoing, more knowledgeable, more experienced, and wiser.¹²

When I read this paragraph, written by Dewey (in the conversation box) about one hundred years ago, I

remembered my daughter Tracy, struggling with her wooden jigsaw puzzles, only occasionally asking help from me. In this struggle, whenever she found two matching pieces, she exclaimed, clapped, laughed and turned to me to share her pleasure. I gave her big smiles and believed this little discoverer was experiencing the joy which Dewey (1966/1916) takes as “the joy of intellectual constructiveness – of creativeness” (159). I try to help her in this process: when I give useful suggestions, Tracy pats my shoulder, “Smart, Mom!”; if my suggestions do not work,

¹² For more on John Dewey’s sense of wisdom, see Doll’s Daxia lecture, “The Wisdom of John Dewey” (2010).

she shrugs, “Mmm, we need to rethink about this piece.” If Dewey is right that no experience can be given, that Tracy’s experiencing has to be “created” by herself, my best role is to help Tracy do her own “crafting of an experience”¹³ – by giving *way* to her.

In this lived rhythm of experiencing as “intakings and outgivings” (using Dewey’s metaphor of experiencing as breathing, 1934, 56), *en-teaching* needs to recognize that waying is for reaching, not transferring. Experiencing is not merely to attain something, but to respond to the call that “pertains to us, meets and makes its appeal to us,” and to enter the transformative bond with it. In other words, the process of experiencing in waying is more important than the attainment of a particular experience on *the way*: the call is an invitation that has to be nurtured rather than issued as a direct demand, command or instruction. When one is called, one is obliged to respond and thus surrenders to it. This surrendering as the “yielding of the self” (Dewey, 1934, 53) gives way while no one way is given to the self. As Heidegger (1981/1947-48) says, “the call of the pathway speaks only as long as there are men” who are “servants of their origin, not slaves of machination” (70). He critiques that “the will to will” as the essence of modern technology would cause us to be deaf to this call. Next I explore the possibility of *en-teaching* as “wait[ing] in silent readiness.”

¹³ Doll uses Philip Jackson’s phrase (1998) “crafting of an experience,” in discussing Dewey’s concept of “experience” in his “Crafting An Experience.”

En-Teaching as “Wait[ing] in Silent Readiness”

As suggested in the conversation box, Heidegger thinks the essence of modern technology is not the technological itself but the way that technology comes from man’s “will to mastery” and thus dominates our present society. He says in the modern technological society, “everywhere everything is ordered to stand by, to be immediately on hand, indeed to stand there just so that it may be on call for a further ordering...We call it the standing-reserve [*Bestand*]” (1993/1949, 322). For Heidegger, the greatest danger of modern technology is that one day man would be taken as standing-reserve while still living in the illusion that everything he encounters is his construct. Man thinks he is now the lord of the world and earth by the tool of technology, but he is actually willed, mastered, and controlled by technology, especially as technology has already “moved long since beyond his [man’s] will” and “outgrown his capacity for decision” (Heidegger, 1966/1955, 51).

Heidegger: *The will to mastery becomes all the more urgent the more technology threatens to slip from human control (1993/1949, 313)*

Chuang Tzu: *Those who use machines have to acquire skills of machines and thus hearts of machines... Then my spirit becomes restless and loses Tao. (Chuang Tzu, Ch. 12)*

Dewey: *The senses [of teachers and students] are then regarded as a kind of mysterious conduit through which information is conducted from the external world into the mind; they are spoken of as gateways and avenues of knowledge. (1966/1916, 142)*

This phrase “being willed by the will to will” is comparable to Chuang Tzu’s phrase, “the heart of machines.”¹⁴ The quotation in the conversation box comes from a story in “Chuang Tzu,” the explanation of a peasant to a scholar as to why he refuses to use technological instruments to make his fieldwork easier. What worries the peasant, who knows the technologies, is not the use of technological tools but the way he might be dominated by the will to control.

¹⁴ The relation between Lao Tzu and Zhuang Tzu is, in some sense, that between Socrates and Plato. They can be taken as the two most important Taoist thinkers and this is why the Taoist philosophy is also often called Lao-Chuang philosophy. Zhuang Tzu’s “Zhuang Tzu” and Lao Tzu’s “Tao Te Ching” are two foundational classics in Taoism. Also note the difference in spelling between Chuang and Zhuang.

This will to control reflected in our schooling system, can hold both teachers and students “standing reserves” as mediums and containers of knowledge, as Dewey notes in his comment. Even the organs and senses of teachers and students are reduced to mechanical functions, specifically, the memorizing or reproducing functions. Heidegger, however, does not think we should ask the question, “What are we to do?” Regarding this “greatest danger” of modern technology, this question “still tempts us to think that human activity can counter or master this danger”: the answer to that question is “to ponder, to recollect, to reflect, to question, to think, to prepare, to wait” (Heidegger, in Bernstein, 1992, 115).¹⁵

¹⁵ Bernstein critiques that “Heidegger seduces us into thinking that the only possible response (the highest possibility) to the supreme danger of *Gestell* [enframing] is poetic revealing” – the Heideggerian bias to “displace praxis by thinking” (126-127). In contrast, Bernstein thinks the highest possibility might be “action which is exhibited in the public space of political debate, action that presupposes the human condition of plurality and natality” (127). Bernstein agrees with Hans-Georg Gadamer’s argument that Heidegger is guilty of “‘a terrible intellectual hubris’ when he leads us to think that the only proper (authentic) response to the supreme danger is to prepare ourselves to watch over unconcealment” (in Bernstein, 128). For more on unconcealment, see Wrathall’s “Heidegger and Unconcealment” (2010).

As for Bernstein’s criticism of Heidegger’s ideas, I agree and disagree. I agree with Bernstein that we need the practical wisdom of praxis but disagree with his critique of Heidegger’s “thinking,” especially Heidegger’s seemingly passive merely *watching* not *acting* over unconcealment of being or truth. In the beginning of his “Letter on Humanism,” Heidegger writes, “Thinking does not become action only because some effect issues from it or because it is applied. Thinking acts insofar as it thinks” (217). At first sight, this thinking seems to be passive inaction, but as it actively engages with “what remains reserved and in store” in beings for possibilities of “not yet” (437), it is in essence prudent and reflexive action. I do not think Heidegger’s taking this thinking as the highest form of action is “a terrible intellectual hubris.”

In fact, Heidegger has answered Bernstein’s critique in the *Spiegel* interview (1981/1966) as he is asked several times by the interviewer how philosophy can influence our actuality. When he is asked again about the transmission of insights into actualization, Heidegger says, “I know nothing about how this thought has an ‘effect.’ It may be, too, that the way of thought today may lead one to remain silent in order to protect this thought from becoming cheapened within a year. It may also be that it needs 300 years in order to have an ‘effect’” (60). All of his answers suggest that even if thinking has an “effect,” it is never in a causal way. What this thinking is against is not real action or the praxis as suggested by Bernstein, but is of unthoughtful thinking/actions. Bernstein, of course, is critical of what he believes were Heidegger’s nonactions regarding Jews when he was rector at Freiberg during the Nazi years. The literature on this period of Heidegger’s life is voluminous and contentious.

In the framework of modern technology as “enframing,” the strong sense of “waiting” in the non-casual way Heidegger advocates, through immanent reflections in meditative thinking, echoes the essential spirit of *inaction* in Taoism. Inaction is one of the most important words in Taoism, next to Tao. They are often put together as the “Way/Tao of inaction.” In Ch. 2 of “Tao

Heidegger: *What becomes clear is that the university as pedagogical community is constructed to be hierarchical and authoritarian: the student is subjected to the discipline of the teacher. Implicit in all of this, of course, is that the representation of the teacher is borrowed from techne and its relations of production. It is precisely this reduction of education to the instrumental, by analogy with techne, that is the source of everything awry with the university today. (2002/1945, 35)*

Dewey: *Growth is not something done to them [students]; it is something they do. (1966/1916, 42)*

Lao Tzu: *The sage inacts....Therefore, everything grows by coming through him rather than of him. (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 2)*

Te Ching,” Lao Tzu says, “Tao inacts and therefore acts everywhere.” For Lao Tzu, this inaction is not a passive non-doing, but careful and reflective undoing. As suggested in the conversation box by Lao Tzu, the sage “inacts” to let everything grow without instigating it. Interestingly, “growth” is also one of the favorite metaphors in Dewey. Dewey’s statement “Growth is not something done to them [students]; it is something they do,” relates

well to Lao Tzu’s saying of growth “coming through him [sage] rather than of him.” This sense of “letting grow” disappears, according to Heidegger, in the “hierarchical and authoritarian” educational institutions in which “the student is subjected to the discipline of the teacher.”

Heidegger points out that the analogy between teaching and production comes from the essence of modern technology, “*techne*” as “enframing” or the establishment of what is organized and finished rather than the revealing or unconcealment of truth in art. As Heidegger says, “*techne*” reduces education to the instrumental. The greatest danger of this education is the same as that of modern technology, the will to will, master or control. When teachers try to control students’ learning, students are thus subjected to the order of teachers; teachers, too, are

dominated by this will to control, and thus cannot respond to the lived calls of each unique face of their students.¹⁶ If Heidegger is correct, that we can “do” nothing to “counter or master” this danger, how can we challenge this education as “enframing”? When I ponder this question, a comment I heard before from one student teacher about her own instructor jumps into my mind. The student complained that the instructor of her educational foundations class taught her only “how to think, rather than how to teach.” Are thinking and teaching totally separate from each other as suggested in that complaint? Before turning to that question, I’d like to first explore Heidegger’s thoughts on thinking, one of the most significant topics in his later works.

In his “Discourse on Thinking,” Heidegger (1966/1955) argues that thoughtlessness has now become the symbol of our age and he criticizes that the world now becomes open to calculative thinking which always computes with the intention of serving particular purposes to guarantee certain results while never stopping or (re)collecting itself.¹⁷ This description of calculative thinking sounds so familiar to me, as it resonates with the learning experience in my undergraduate teacher education program in China. “Teaching Methods” was the name of several of the most important courses in my major of education, and I had been trained quite well in the linear order of teaching in both the “Tyler Rationale” and Herbart’s “Five Steps.” These methods were calculated carefully from setting up the objectives – often in behavioral terms – at the beginning of the course to the evaluation at the end, assessing the achievement of the objectives.¹⁸ Even now I remember clearly a former professor stating in the first class that,

¹⁶ For more of this lived call to students’ faces, see Aoki (2005).

¹⁷ Instead, Heidegger (1966) encourages us to look forward to “meditative thinking” which “contemplates the meaning which reigns in everything that is” (46). He says, “Meditative thinking demands of us not to cling one-sidedly to a single idea, nor to run down a one-track course of ideas” (53). Only this meditative thinking for Heidegger is real thinking.

¹⁸ It is worth noting in this frame that the evaluation is always on how well the objectives were achieved, not on the quality of the objectives themselves. The question as to whether the objectives were worth doing was not asked. The

“Teaching is a method. We have to learn how to predict, plan and guarantee our students’ learning.” Then he began the class with a concrete classroom example, lecturing why and how to “guide” students’ learning by setting up objectives. Interestingly, I read the same classroom example again 12 years later when I reviewed the national textbooks for teacher education programs in Chinese normal colleges and universities (Su, 2009). The textbook tells a story: after dividing his 5th graders into two groups before a field trip to a farm, a teacher asks one group to observe plants and the other animals. After the class comes back to school, the teacher asks both groups to write two observation reports, one on plants and the other on animals. Unsurprisingly, the “plant” group does poorly on “animals” and vice versa.

In reading this example, used by both my professor and the textbook to justify the necessity and importance of prescribing particular objectives for teaching any class, I read the opposite message – it is the predetermined objectives by teachers that restrict and obstruct possibilities of learning in not only students but teachers. The “natural” growth advocated by both Lao Tzu and Dewey was violently impeded. When teachers try to control—via *the way*—the method of teaching-as-telling in order to guarantee students’ learning, both teachers and students are also, at the same time, controlled by *the way* from which they cannot run away.

When I reflect on the training I have received on “teaching methods,” I think its fundamental problem is in considering teaching as merely a “method” of “doing,” or specifically a “method” of “growing students” toward particular directions. If teaching is only an umbrella term for the steps, procedures, strategies or tricks of teaching, the complaint upon the teacher educator who teaches students only “how to think, rather than how to teach” can be justified. As Heidegger (1971/1959) claims, “Thinking is not [just a] means to gain knowledge” (70), I suggest teaching is not just a method to transfer knowledge. Beside the analogy between

American critique of this behaviorist frame can be found in Kliebard (1995).

teaching and modern technology in Heidegger's critique of schooling, I find another analogy between teaching and thinking: like genuine thinking, genuine teaching "does not wish and is not able to predict the future" (1993/1966, 437).

Heidegger says this thinking is "content with awakening a readiness in man for a possibility whose contour remains obscure, whose coming remains uncertain," so we must "first learn what remains reserved and in store... what it is to get involved" (436). Thinking "prepares its own transformation in this learning" (436). He calls this thinking preparatory thinking (437). He says to his wife, "what is essential never 'exerts an effect' but only 'is' provided that something of its own kind comes to meet it from a deeper origin. Yet we cannot plan this, but only wait in silent readiness" (2008/1939, 160). If philosophers as genuine thinkers cannot offer even indirect help to reality in any casual way, how can teachers *teach* their students for the future? My response is that teachers have to *en-teach*. Like genuine but "inactive" thinking, *en-teaching* has to "wait in silent readiness" rather than "teach efficiently."

Through *en-teaching* one "learn[s] what remains reserved and in store for it, what it is to get involved in"; one does not act, but watches patiently. To use the metaphor of "growth" in Dewey and Lao Tzu, the careful learning of the seeds, soils, climates and even bugs in the garden allows the gardener to see a readiness for possibilities "whose contour remains obscure, whose coming remains uncertain." Then the gardener can gently awaken this readiness which is full of potential for future transformations. In this sense, *en-teaching* does not "exert an effect" on students or students' learning, but waits for something that can "be" provided for students' growth "from a deeper origin." This waiting sounds inactive, especially as what it waits for is not a concrete "result," but a "readiness" for possibilities of what is not yet. In returning to the question of objectives and concern about how students can learn without specific objectives, it is

true the “plant” group in the previous example, observes plants well, as the “animal” group observes animals well. All students’ visions, however, are confined or restricted by the preset objectives of the particular group to which they belong. The students interested in “cows” on the farm but *assigned* to the “plant” group are out of luck. According to Kliebard (1995), many educators have been “so completely socialized into the belief that the starting point for virtually any educational activity is a clearly stated objective or set of objectives” and forgotten that objectives can “emerge out of the educational activities themselves rather than prior to them” (82). In other words, can we just “engage in an educational activity for good reasons that have nothing to do with objectives” (82)? Can the students be allowed to take a stroll of the farm by themselves, running, roaring and watching, and then form their own groups with the teacher as a wise aid to help them on the things they want to explore?¹⁹ Here, I hear the powerful call of Emerson, “Respect the child. Be not too much his parent. Trespass not on his solitude” (in Dewey, 1966/1916, 52).

Like Lao Tzu’s sage, *en-teaching* acts through inactions by “awakening a readiness.” Joan Stambaugh quotes the poem “Sils Maria” (Friedrich Nietzsche) in discussing Heidegger’s thinking as waiting:

Here I sat waiting, waiting – yet for nothing,
Beyond good and evil, enjoying now the light,
Now the shadows, all only a game,
All sea, all noon, all time without a goal (Nietzsche, 1986/1981, 134)

Nietzsche’s waiting has gone “beyond good and evil” in enjoying the game of “light” and “shadow” “without a goal.” Unlike the will to put everything under control, *en-teaching* waits,

¹⁹ This does not mean the teacher’s role is reduced to the same level as that of the student – “The teacher loses the position of external boss or dictator but takes on that of leader of group activities” (Dewey, 1963/1938, 59). Dewey thinks teachers should draw on their past experience and expertise to help students interact with subject materials from students’ present interests, needs and capacities and thus to see in which direction an educative experience might be leading. What teachers use to guide students in teaching is not their external control from above, but, according to Dewey, “the very nature of the work done as a social enterprise in which all individuals have an opportunity to contribute and to which *all* feel a *responsibility*” (56, emphasis added).

never wills – it does not constantly predict, plan, assess and compute both teaching and learning. The “enjoying” of “now the light, now the shadows” brings me back to the previous explorations of the struggle between light and darkness, empty and full, in the game or play of (un)truth. As this waiting has no goal, it becomes void or empty – it is “for nothing” and at the same time, therefore, can be “for everything” – a generative site of possibilities thus emerges. In this sense, *en-teaching* does not directly teach by intruding into students’ growth, but acts as “a vigorous fragrance” of “a wheatfield on a summer’s night.”²⁰

En-Teaching as the “Noiseless Ringing of Stillness”

Another key word in Heidegger’s complex thinking is language as he states that his reflections on language and Being have influenced his path of thinking from early on. Heidegger (1971/1959) believes “language is the house of Being” (63); he argues that *to say* means “to make appear, set free, that is, to offer and extend what we call World, lighting and concealing it” (93). In other words, *saying* is showing, which at the same time unconceals and conceals. Furthermore, Heidegger thinks the word “holds and sustains a thing in its being,” (65) rather than acting “like a grasp that fastens upon the things already in being and held to be in being” (68). In this sense, the word or language inscribes rather than *represents* being.

²⁰ In quoting Nietzsche that “Our thinking should have a vigorous fragrance, like a wheatfield on a summer’s night,” Heidegger (1971/1959) sighs, “How many of us today still have the senses for that fragrance?” (70).

While the essence of modern technology, “enframing,” ordains a formalized language which can model and adjust man “into the technological-calculative creature, a step-by-step process through which he surrenders his ‘natural language,’” Heidegger (1993/1959) says that speech becomes information as securely established (420-421). Therefore, man forgets “speaking is not *simultaneously* a hearing, but is such *in advance*” (Heidegger, 411, emphasis original). As the enframing makes speaking merely *speaking* rather than listening or responding, speaking turns into monologue. This is one of the major critiques of teaching-as-telling – the speaking or monologue of the teacher dominating the classroom. The teacher’s voice is the only one to listen to. Students are then expected to be receptive of the “uniform” information sent from the teacher’s monologue, no matter how “weary” and “bored” this “monotonous” speaking is. Dewey teases, “To keep the eyes on the book and the ears open to the teacher’s words is a mysterious source of intellectual grace.” Along with teachers’ monologues, students’ silence is one of the prime virtues of traditional schools. This required silence of students is not only necessitated by, but complementary to, the speaking-as-telling of the teacher. Both work together for the ultimate aim of “the accumulation of knowledge” in students; however, Lao Tzu claims, this learning “reduces the Tao.” When I considered this statement in Lao Tzu along with Heidegger and Dewey in the conversation box, three critical incidents of my past school experience came to mind.

Heidegger: *The monotonous brings weariness, and the weary and bored find only what is uniform. (1981, 70)*

Dewey: *To keep the eyes on the book and the ears open to the teacher’s words is a mysterious source of intellectual grace. (1966/1916, 142)*

Lao Tzu: *The accumulation of knowledge through learning reduces the Tao. (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 41)*

One of the rules that was deeply imprinted in my mind since kindergarten is: “Never ever interject in class without permission.” I knew throughout K-12 that I, like my daughter Tracy, must be a good listener if I want to be a good student. When I became a student teacher, my

Chinese mentor once had the following conversation with me after she observed my intern teaching: “Jie, do you find that you say nothing whenever you write on the blackboard?” “That might be true. Is that a problem?” “Of course, a BIG problem.” “Why?” “Because this creates a deadly silence in class. Your students will not know what to do. They can do nothing except watch you write on the blackboard. That’s a waste of time.” Since then I began to consciously have the habit of continuing to talk while writing on the blackboard, turning on the projector, opening PowerPoint, and collecting students’ work in class. While the educational foundation class I was teaching discussed Freire’s “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” one girl talked about her geography class, “We call the professor Killer Miller. She is so talkative and never stops. I know there’s much useful information in her talking, but while she just keeps on talking, talking, talking... How we hope she can shut up!”

Now when I look back to the three incidents, they constitute, in some sense, a brief but complete story and history, from my learning the “virtue” of listening as a student, to the “virtue” of speaking/telling as a teacher, and finally students’ resistance to both as I become a teacher educator. While students’ silence before the teacher’s speaking is required and valued in traditional direct teaching, my mentor teacher uses the word, “deadly,” to describe the silence of students before that of the teacher, for it is assumed that “students will not know what to do.” That means students can only follow the teacher’s lead – without the telling of the teacher, students can go nowhere. The point is that while the silence of students is appreciated, that of the teacher is discouraged. This emphasis on speaking over silence, teaching as doing over undoing, is against the spirit of Tao, especially as Lao Tzu argues, “the greatest sound is silence” (Ch. 41). Furthermore, the achievement of Tao through inaction is totally different and even contrary to the accumulation of knowledge as information. For Lao Tzu, it is unsurprising that this form of

teaching and learning is the reduction of Tao.

Looking to the future, what intrigues me at the end of the third incident is what will

Heidegger: *We keep secret only what we know. The poet does not keep the names a secret. He does not know them. He admits it himself in that one verse which rings like a basso ostinato through all the songs:*

Wherein you hang – you do not know.

The experience of this poet with the word passes into darkness, and even remains veiled itself. We must leave it so; but merely by thinking about the poetic experience in this way, we leave it in the neighborhood of thinking. (1971/1959, 79, emphasis added)

Chuang Tzu: *He sees in the darkest dark, he hears where there is no sound. In the midst of darkness, he alone sees the dawn; in the midst of the soundless, he alone hears harmony. (Chuang Tzu, Ch. 12)*

Dewey: *It is all made “for listening” ... it marks the dependency of one mind upon another. This attitude of listening means, comparatively speaking, passivity... (1990/1900/02, 31-32)*

happen if the teacher is “shut up.” Under “enframing,” Heidegger thinks the greatest danger of language “demands of us *a telling silence* as regards the propriative, way-making movement in the essence of language” (424, emphasis added). Here silence refers to that of the speaker, not the listener. Since “silence” is usually taken as the antonym of “speaking,” how is silence related to the essence of language or speaking? In the conversation box, Chuang Tzu answers, “He sees in the darkest dark, he hears where there is no sound.” The

poetic metaphor given by Heidegger might explain how one listens in silence.

The metaphor of poetry is often used by Heidegger in discussing language. Heidegger (1971/1959) says when the poet writes, he experiences “an authority, a dignity of the word than which nothing vaster and loftier can be thought,” as he is “trusted and entrusted as poet” by the word – “The poet experiences his poetic calling as a call to the word as the source, the bourn of Being” (66). This extraordinary example might sound strange to many people. How can the word or language have its own “authority” and “dignity” toward the “trusted and entrusted” writer or speaker? Here language is living in an interactive relationship with humans. Once humans hear that “poetic calling as call to the word as the source, the bourn of Being,” they are obliged to

respond. In this sense, it is not that the poet writes poems but that the poet is called by the word to write. Therefore, the poet does not possess the word or verse he writes down – he even cannot “understand” it – “Wherein you hang, you do not know.”

This is why Heidegger says, “The experience of this poet with the word passes into darkness, and even remains veiled itself.” This darkness does not mean that the word is completely concealed to the poet, but implies the word is unconcealed to the poet as he is called to write while at the same time concealed as beyond the knowing of the poet. It is not a despair of the failure of control, but a call or claim for the poet to live with(in) this darkness: “We must leave it so; but merely by thinking about the poetic experience in this way, we leave it in the neighborhood of thinking.” Through this thinking about the poetic experience of the darkness, we know we do not or even cannot know. Respecting without violently intruding into this darkness of unknowing, therefore, we can see the dawn “in the midst of darkness” and hear harmony “in the midst of the soundless.” In Chinese, the word “harmony” is used in the sense of “lived” and “dynamical” going together, as in music, rather than fixed or static unity and conformity, as soldiers walking at the same pace. This harmony lives in the intricate play between darkness and light, concealment and unconcealment, speaking and silence. This harmonious “hearing” is different from the passive “listening” criticized by Dewey in the conversation box. It does not depend on speaking; rather, it speaks through genuine thinking, knowing through unknowing.

Heidegger: *Silence corresponds to the noiseless ringing of stillness, the stillness of the saying that appropriates and shows.* (1993/1959, 420)

Lao Tzu: *Therefore, I know the good of inaction. Few things in the world can be better than the wordless teaching and inaction.* (Tao Te Ching, Ch. 43)

Dewey: *Education is not an affair of "telling" and being told.* (1966/1916, 38)

En-teaching calls for this hearing of harmony in silence, or using Heidegger's phrase in the conversation box, "the noiseless ringing of the stillness." Heidegger (1971/1959) explains that this "ringing of stillness" is "the soundless gathering call by which Saying moves the world-relation in its way" (92). The Heideggerian focus on "still" or "stillness" in language, which appears as early as in "Being and Time," echoes Taoism here. Heidegger has asked Hsiao, a Taoist philosopher, to inscribe two lines of Ch. 15 from "Tao Te Ching" in Chinese characters as decoration in his house and later translated them in one of his letters to Hsiao, "Who can be still and out of stillness and through it move something on to the Way so that it comes to shine forth? Who is able through making still to bring something into Being? The Tao of heaven" (Hsiao, 1987, 103). This implies the "wordless teaching" advocated by Lao Tzu in the conversation box. While the teaching as the telling of uniform truth is common in today's daily classrooms, this teaching without words rings silently in the soundless darkness between speaking and hearing. Like the poet, the teacher is called to speak and teach but does not possess what to teach and whom to speak to. In other words, the teacher is not in unitary control of subject materials and students. Similarly, Dewey maintains, "Education is not an affair of 'telling' and being told."

While the speaking in teaching-as-telling speaks only what the teacher already understands and forces students to listen only, I suggest *en-teaching* teaches wordlessly through a "speaking silence." I create the phrase "speaking silence," for I think both teachers and students are "silenced" in the telling of the traditional direct teaching. When the teacher speaks not as a response, that is not as "a reply, a saying that goes to encounter, and listens" (Heidegger,

1993/1959, 418), s/he does not speak in a Heideggerian sense. For example, when the teacher asks students if they have any questions as for what s/he has said in class, s/he is merely checking if students listen and understand well her/his tellings – no genuine speaking or listening occurs. While the ears of students are reduced to listening, the mouths speaking only what can be validated or affirmed by the teacher, they do not speak either. This is the real “deadly silence” that we need to be scared of – often the teacher speaks forcefully and students listen carefully in the classroom, but essentially no one is speaking or listening. The source of this tragedy, we forget, is that “man [also] speaks by being silent” (Heidegger, 1993/1951, 52, 381).

In this sense, the “speaking silence” of *en-teaching* speaks through silence. Max van Manen (1991) thinks silence has the “power of stillness” in education: it involves

a quiet trustful acceptance (while not interrogating or probing the child’s mood), or a resolute turning away (while not really leaving), or a quietly passing over (while not in any way neglecting), or an unobtrusive lingering presence (while not being demonstrative or purposive about being there for the child in any way neglecting). (177-178)

A speaking silence becomes a “stepping back” in which both the teacher and students are granted opportunities to have broader visions of what is encountered and to dwell in “the neighborhood of thinking.” As they dwell in this “neighborhood of thinking,” both teachers and students do not rush to speak but hold on and wait in silence. They genuinely think in a way in which “thinking is a thanking” (Heidegger, 1993/1959, 425), rather than regretting or despairing: teachers and students appreciate and are thankful for their “hanging”²¹ and “unknowing” in that darkness. Rather than willing the darkness through endless noisy speaking, *en-teaching* ponders upon the darkness through silence. This silence is a surrender but not a giving up. It comes from the tensioned relation between teacher, student and subject material. For Heidegger, the silence

²¹ Here it refers back to one of Heidegger’s quotations in conversation box, “Wherein you hang – you do not know.” (1971/1959, 79).

speaks not as holding, grasping, catching, pushing or pulling, but as reaching, extending, *calling*, receiving and welcoming.

Conclusion

Heidegger, Dewey and Lao Tzu live in quite different historical periods and places, but their insightful thoughts, in some sense, resonate with each other. As Heidegger has read and even translated Lao Tzu's masterpiece, "Tao Te Ching," many of his phenomenological works speak to the spirit of Tao in Lao Tzu. This chapter has explored possibilities of *en-teaching* as a clearing between truth and untruth, the call of the Way of Tao as waying, "wait[ing] in silent readiness," and the "noiseless ringing of stillness" from the complex conversations between these three great thinkers. These possibilities are not independent or separate from each other, but intertwined with each other. The "empty" clearing, reflective thinking in waiting, and silent listening in stillness are explored as different ways of *en-teaching*, all placed against "enframing," the will to control, present in traditional direct teaching. In brief, *en-teaching* is waitful thinking, thanking in "silent readiness," a "noiseless ringing" attuned to calls of the way[ing] of Tao.

Chapter Five

En-Teaching as Releasement

In this final chapter, I will pull together threads connecting stories and themes in this dissertation, a research project to develop another way to think about teaching, which I have called *en-teaching*. In this chapter, I wish to present a more in-depth picture of *en-teaching*. Two related issues have fueled my passion to develop the concept of *en-teaching*. I introduce this with a story:

“You Are an Excellent, Aggressive Teacher.”

As revealed in Chapter one, my long unsettling journey in the development of *en-teaching* began from my first intern teaching experience in a middle school in Shanghai thirteen years ago. After I surrendered to my mentor’s pressure to be teaching-as-telling, to push my students to learn for testing, she happily complimented me by reporting on my evaluation form, “You are an excellent, aggressive teacher.” At that time, I wondered, “What does the word, ‘aggressive,’ mean in teaching?” “Does it mean that I should dominate my students to guarantee certain results?” “Do I always have to be *aggressive* to be an *excellent* teacher?”.... These were confusing, burning questions for me. I could not figure out the answers but the disappearing passion for learning in my students’ bored eyes and their looks of resignation made me feel uncomfortable with this aggressive way of teaching. Teaching so conceived is an act of violence. Is there not a better way to teach?

A second issue related to the first is based on my observation that teaching-as-narrating/telling is so entrenched in the public school systems in both America and China, that it is seen not simply as a teaching method, but as *the only way* to teach. Even now,

many national textbooks for teacher education programs in Chinese normal universities and colleges insist that “narrating/telling method” is *the* most important one in teaching. While acknowledging the possible shortcomings of this method, researchers insist this is not only the oldest and easiest but also the most efficient, practical and thus widely applied teaching method (Shao, 1997; C. Wang, 2005; Chu & Pan, 2009). Many of these researchers try to better this teaching method by paying more attention to students’ learning; however, in reality, their attempts continue to justify teaching-as-narrating/telling—always recommending ways of doing it better. Teaching-as-telling understood as teaching, is synonymous with instruction, and it defines schooling. It is like an elephant in the room – never itself addressed as a problem. It is never reconceived in terms of relations between and among teachers, students, curriculum and culture.

“Can There Be a Different Way of Teaching?”

This question immediately brings me back to the passionate, perhaps overzealous, statement by my first education professor in China regarding teaching as enlightenment, teaching the truth. In reviewing selected literature critical of “teaching-as-telling” in America and China, I suggest in chapter two that in traditional direct teaching of “truth,” teaching is reduced to a method to instruct students to gain knowledge under the shining Sun of Truth, a concept criticized by Heidegger as “brighter than one thousand suns.” Since I engage with the question of truth related to teaching and since the question “can there be a different way” “assumes the greatest urgency in Heidegger’s thought” (Sallis, 20), chapter three focuses on Heidegger’s complex explorations of (un)truth in clearings between brightness and darkness along with his concept of “let learn” through always

“being-in-the-world.” Graduate school readings, especially in Heidegger, Lao Tzu, and Dewey, have aided me in my struggle to find an alternative to teaching-as-telling.

While I am proposing an *alternative* way to conceive teaching, an alternative to traditional direct teaching, I am at the same time proposing that *en-teaching* can be incorporated into any curriculum, is complementary to any curriculum, and can be integrated with direct teaching. The implied dichotomy set up by my referring to an *alternative* is not to suggest throwing out traditional direct teaching or instruction in favor of *en-teaching*; rather, it is to point out that each has different fundamental assumptions and philosophical perspectives about the act of teaching. Therefore, as Lyotard notes about post-modernism being a re-writing of modernity rather than a rejection, I am similarly re-writing teaching-as-telling. Of course, there are occasions that call for traditional direct instruction. In the poststructural sense, however, I am opening the concept of teaching, i.e., what it means to teach, to provide new ways of thinking about teaching. The profoundly different fundamental assumptions and philosophical basis of *en-teaching* are formed from my interconnected readings of Heidegger on (un)truth, being, language and modern technology, of Lao Tzu on emptiness, inaction and Tao/way, and of Dewey on growth, immaturity, and experience, as shown in chapter four. Drawn from the complex conversations I created among these three great thinkers living in quite different historical periods and places, chapter four develops possibilities of *en-teaching* as waitful thinking, awake in “silent readiness” for a “noiseless ringing” attuned to calls of the way[ing] of Tao.

Few in curriculum studies, draw on Heidegger’s writings, Molly Quinn (1997) being a notable exception. Recently, Michael Peters (2002) and Iain Thomson (2005)

seek to explicate Heidegger's philosophy related to education. In my research, developing the concept of *en-teaching*, however, my purpose is to bring forward from Heidegger the meaning of teaching and the role of teachers. *En-teaching* is different than anything proposed by Peters or Thomson, primarily because it focuses on the act of classroom teaching.

In regard to classroom teaching, *en-teaching* is being-in-relation – “to let learn.” Since teaching is being with humans, this being-in-relation does not only mean the relation between the act and content of teaching or learning but also the relation between teaching and learning. Heidegger (1993/1936) argues, “Teaching therefore does not mean anything else than to let the others learn, that is, to bring one another to learning. Teaching is more difficult than learning; for only he who can truly learn – and only as long as he can do it – can truly teach” (275). In this sense, teaching is not the determination of learning but letting learning happen – the teacher is not the dictator but helper or facilitator of his students. This is why Heidegger (1993/1951-52) writes that “The teacher must be capable of being more teachable than the apprentices” (380). While the teacher learns through teaching, students also can teach through learning. This is quite different from the traditional linear logic of “the teacher teaches and then students learn.” Heidegger (1993/1951-52) claims, “To learn means to make everything we do answer to whatever essentials address us at a given time” (380). *En-teaching* needs to present evocative work to students for their critical responses. *En-teaching*, unlike instructing, opposes to the mechanical transferring of knowledge/truth from teacher to student in an authoritative top-down relationship. Whenever the teacher says this is the right answer, that cuts off learning.

Second, *en-teaching* means to improvise, to “create your own music on the spot.” One day after I watched Tracy finish her daily piano exercise, I went out of the room to get a drink for her. When I back, I saw Tracy closed her piano “Lesson Book” and played with the keys freely. “Which song are you playing, Tracy?” “Oh, that’s my own song.” “Your song?” I frowned. “Yes, Mommy. I’m improvising.” I then smiled, “Do you know what it means to improvise?” “Of course I know. To improvise means to ‘create your own music at the spot.’ Ms. Kate said it.” At that time, this metaphorical meaning of improvisation left me in thinking for a long time. As the proliferation of “method” courses such as “math methods” and “English methods” in many teacher education programs assumes teaching is merely a method to instruct students to gain accepted knowledge or truth, *en-teaching* as improvisation regards teaching as an “art” rather than a “craft” or “technique.” It requires the teacher to “create *my* own music at the spot” and thus be willing to flow with the complex dynamics of classroom teaching and learning. In other words, the responsibility of the teacher is to respond to every lived call from students carefully in emergent situations.

Third, *en-teaching* promotes the “collateral learning” of “*enduring attitudes* of likes and dislikes” as advocated by Dewey (1963/1938, 48, emphasis added). Dewey thinks this learning is much more significant than the actual content of learning. Unfortunately, few of us as teachers have genuinely realized this. This reminds me of a television interview I watched in China. When the winner of the gold medal of the international Olympic math competition in that year was asked why he rejected all admission offers and scholarships from university math departments, including almost all Ivy League universities in U.S., finally choosing psychology as the major, he replied,

after an extremely long pause: “Because I *hate* math.” What an astonishing answer! No matter how successful one’s education is in training students to acquire highly sophisticated knowledge and skills in a particular subject, it is still a failure if it cannot cultivate students’ interest and passion in this discipline.

Fourth but not the least importantly, *en-teaching* can be cultivated through reflective experience in a recursive loop. This is how I learn from my experiences. Reflecting on my past two unsettling journeys of teaching in China and America produces questions about the teaching of truth deep in my heart. I gradually built up my critical, reflexive thoughts on teaching through playing with the ideas of a great variety of educational scholars and with their different conceptualizations of teaching. In this critical self study or examination, I try to talk to myself in different teaching modes in multi-I conversations. When I re-visit myself in such a critical reflective journey and look forward to the future in the present, I can experience my growth (using the metaphor from Dewey) in a recursive loop.

“What Does *En-Teaching* Mean to Me as I Face My Class on Monday Morning?”

Friends who have read my dissertation, and inquiry project on “*en-teaching*,” have often made a similar response: “Your conceptualization and writing on *en-teaching* is poetic and appealing, but what does it mean to a practicing teacher?” My philosophy professor who brought Heidegger to me commented, “I appreciate your understanding and use of Heidegger in the field of philosophy, but wonder how your education people will think about it. They might question what this ‘*en-teaching*’ as ‘way-giving,’

‘emptiness,’ ‘waiting,’ and ‘speaking silence,’ means for a regular teacher.” In short, the *practical* question is “What does *en*-teaching mean to me, a practicing teaching, as I face my class on Monday morning?”

To answer that question, I wish to tell the following story. One story I often share with my students, future elementary teachers, to help them see how *en*-teaching can *make*

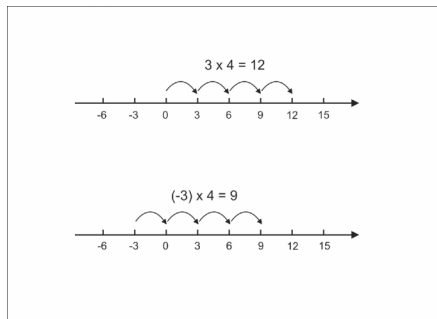


Figure 5.2 $(-3) \times 4 = ?$

sense for pre- and in-service teachers. In a 5th grade math class, students were working on the question, “ $(-3) \times 4$ ” (Zhang, 2008). While most students got the answer, “-12,” one student stammered, “I th-h-h-ink it should be 9.” “Why?” The teacher became curious

and allowed the boy to write down the process on the blackboard. The boy then drew two number lines to explain to the class, “Since ‘ 3×4 ’ means to make 4 jumps of 3 steps on the number line which finally reaches 12, ‘ $(-3) \times 4$ ’ means to make 4 jumps of 3 steps from ‘-3’ which finally reaches 9.” Before the boy came to the blackboard, many students whispered in class, “That’s incorrect.” “I cannot imagine how he got that answer.” “Ha-ha, let’s see how he got that wrong.” During the boy’s explanation, however, the classroom became more and more quiet. After he finished with a blushed face in front of the class, the teacher clapped, “Great work!” and turned to the class, “I will give you 12 minutes to discuss in groups your thoughts of his way of solving this question and then come back to whole class discussions.” The following discussions were wonderful while they debated on how many jumps there should be, which directions the jumps should take, where the starting points of the jumps begin...

After the class ended, the teacher admitted to the observing researcher that when

she asked the boy to show the class how he got his answer of “9,” she planned to “correct” his “mistake” to keep the class on the “right” track; however, after the boy explained the way he approached to the question, she was struck “dumb,” right in the moment, and did not know how to react, so she let the class have group discussions to give both the class and herself time to seriously reflect on his unique solution.

By conventional mathematical standards, the boy’s answer of “9” to the question, “ $(-3)*4$,” is “untrue,” or as commented by his classmates, “incorrect.” Returning to the passionate and ambitious argument of my former professor of “teaching truth to and thus enlighten our students,” I wonder, if the teacher had followed the suggestion of Comenius that s/he “brings into existence nothing that is useless, or destroys such an object if it be accidentally produced,” such “untruth” would have been violently erased or wiped out in our daily classrooms.

It is, however, true that the student’s “unique” way to approach the question cannot be easily labeled as “wrong.” Indeed, the student’s way can open up a discussion as to the role of zero, the nature of “a starting place,” working with negative numbers, etc. The complex interplay between truth and untruth emerges here. As the boy’s initial exploration unconceals and at the same time conceals the truth of that math question, his way evokes the not-yet possibility of other ways in both students including himself and the teacher. Finally, what matters in that dynamical class conversations is not *what* is the right answer of “ $(-3)*4$ ” but *how* to mathematically understand and engage with that question. Fortunately, the teacher heard the call in his special way of dealing with the question and thus nicely gave way to him and other students in the class.

This is the *en-teaching* I advocate in this dissertation and suggest to my students

as future school teachers. As a teacher educator, I think most current teaching in “methods” courses puts too much emphasis on teaching as a method of helping students achieve “true” knowledge rather than teaching as exploring being in relation. The personal statement I put under my name on Moodle, an online communication site of my class, is a quotation from Galileo Galilei, “We cannot teach people anything; we can only help them discover it within themselves.” If education is not simply a process of “correcting” students to develop in *the* “right” way, but to “let” them “grow” in personal ways, the teacher has to give way to ways of “flow” in the classroom dynamics.

This conceptualization of *en-teaching* correspondingly requires an *en-teaching* curriculum for pre-service teachers. I suggest the first thing a tentative *en-teaching* teacher education program can do is to teach student teachers how to learn from, rather than how to teach, their students – how to patiently listen to, rather than, forcefully tell so called truth to children. In other words, student teachers have to learn to step off from that “elevated platform” in classrooms to learn that teaching is more of “stepping back,” and “letting learn,” rather than “aggressive invading.”

Teaching as “Releasement”: Awakening *En-Teaching*

Sit down and be quiet; face front because all knowledge is at the front; be obedient.

-- William Ayers, 1995, 7

While I was struggling with writing my dissertation on “*en-teaching*,” I squeezed in time to make Tracy’s school lunch for her award as Student of the Month. During lunch, the principal asked students, “Why do you think you are selected as the Student of the Month?” Tracy immediately raised her hand and the principal smiled, “OK, let’s

begin with the pre-kindergarteners. Tracy, why are you selected?” “Because I am a good listener and good reader.” “Great! Listening ears are important in school. I’m proud of you!” Tracy’s little face shone as all people applauded for her “good” and “natural” answer. What first jumped into my mind at that time was not the critique of the “teaching-as-telling” or “students’ passive listening” in my dissertation chapters, but an imaginary scene in a jail, “Why do you think you are selected as Prisoner of the Month?” “Because I am a good listener.” “Great! Listening ears are important in jail. I’m proud of you!” I say to myself, “See, there is a reason why jail is often taken as a simile to school.”

When I asked my students why they chose the major of teaching, one of the most frequent answers I have received is, “This is one of the few careers that can *make* people listen to me carefully.” Honestly, teaching as telling truth to students, in some sense, can make the teacher feel as good as a god in the shrine. As critiqued in the beginning quotation by Ayers and as I discussed in chapter two, this emphasis on students’ listening ear toward the teacher’s speaking/telling mouth can be traced back to the Johann Amos Comenius in the western history of education, who is often considered the father of modern education (Gundem, 1992; Hamilton, 1990 & 1992). In his masterpiece, “The Great Didactic,” Comenius (1896/1632) compares the role of the teacher to that of the sun. He first lists the characteristics of the functions of the sun as:

It gives light to all things with the same rays; it covers all things with moisture by the same processes of evaporation and condensation; it causes the same wind to blow on all things; it puts all things in motion by the same warmth and cold...It always preserves the same order; one day resembles another, one year resembles the next. It always operates on one object by the same method...Finally, it brings into existence nothing that is useless, or destroys such an object if it be accidentally produced. (315-316)

Comenius then argues the teacher should teach his students “in imitation of” the sun

(316): as “the mouth of teacher is a spring from which streams of knowledge issue and flow over them,” students must “direct their ears, eyes and thoughts towards him and attend to everything that he tells them by word of mouth” (318). Further, Comenius says, “If he [teacher] stands on an elevated platform, and, keeping all the scholars in his sight at once, allow none of them to do anything but attend and look at him” (319). Even now this “elevated platform,” a *dias*, still remains in most, if not all, classrooms in China through K-16. I wonder if it implies that the teaching and learning activities in the classroom are just another cave story in Plato – a process in which the knowledgeable teacher leads the ignorant chained people upward to see the Sun of Truth. Therefore, as suggested by Comenius, the teacher’s telling has to be obeyed like “the order that was given to the worshippers in the temples of old, namely, ‘This shalt thou do’” (323).

In this sense, teaching-as-narrating/telling becomes the teacher’s *possession* of students, the students’ *possession* of truth. If I am asked to use only one word to describe, explain or summarize *en-teaching*, an alternative to direct teaching, I would say, “Releasement,” drawn from the following conversations from Heidegger’s “Conversation on A Country Path about Thinking” (1966/1944, 45):

Scholar: To be sure I don’t know yet what the word releasement means; but I seem to presage that releasement awakens when our nature is let-in so as to have dealings with that which is not a willing.

Scientist: you speak without letup of a letting-be and give the impression that what is meant is a kind of passivity. All the same, I think I understand that it is in no way a matter of weakly allowing things to slide and drift along.

Scholar: Perhaps a higher acting is concealed in releasement than is found in all the actions within the world and in the machinations of all mankind ...

Teacher: ... which higher acting is yet no activity.

Scientist: Then releasement lies – if we may use the word lie – beyond the distinction between activity and passivity ...

Scholar: ... because releasement does not belong to the domain of the will.

Scientist: The transition from willing into releasement is what seems difficult to me. (61)

In this conversation, releasement does not “will” as in the domain of modern technology, but “awakens when our nature is let-in,” in a third space “between activity and passivity” in which “higher acting is yet no activity.” It echoes not only the “Tao of inaction” in Lao Tzu but the spirit of “let grow” in Dewey. Releasement inacts but this is “in no way a matter of weakly allowing things to slide and drift along.” If the scientist is right that the “transition from willing into releasement” is difficult, the transition from teaching-as-telling to *en*-teaching as releasement is not easier.

Through this releasement as non-willing, as discussed in chapter four, *en*-teaching encourages teachers to step back to create a “void” space which possesses nothing but accommodates everything. In this empty space, both teachers and students are put on a journey of experiencing to learn as all of them are addressed to be responsive and thus open to the lived calls on their own ways. Silence speaks loudest in such responses. In brief, this “holding back” in *en*-teaching is quite different from that of ambitious elevating for “right” visions or rescue as in Comenius’s simile of the teacher to the sun, or Plato’s cave allegory and the desire for ideal knowledge transfers, as in the movie *Waiting for the Superman*.

Michel Serres (1997) asserts that “humanity begins with holding back,” for it invents weakness (117). I argue it is this weakness or vulnerability – the humanness of teachers, not the “truth” possessed by them to instruct and thus lead their students, that allows teachers to teach. As Serres asks, “Who, on the contrary, will sing of the modesty of culture, of the shame of truth, of the understatement of beautiful language, of the wisdom of restraint?” (119), I would answer, “The teacher who *en*-teaches.”

The teacher who *en-teaches* has to be responsive to both students and circumstances, open and vulnerable to the lived classroom calls, and be prepared to awaken in students the readiness to grow. The *en-teacher* is always waiting, but not for the arrival of the Sun of Truth or even a god (*a Deus ex machina*) that might come to rescue us from darkness to light. In this patient waiting, the *en-teacher* watches carefully the growth of students and listens attentively to the silent sound of blossoming in “a vigorous fragrance” of “a wheatfield on a summer’s night.” At the same time, we become “more waitful and more void” – “emptier, but richer in contingencies” (Heidegger, 1966/1944-45, 82). As way-giving yields possibilities in way-making, as silence enhances speaking, as immaturity leads to growth, so *en-teaching* awaits for noiseless ringing in the call of silence from the deep darkness, in a lived life.

Nowadays more Chinese educational researchers and teachers recognize the limitations or dangers of direct teaching. In the current national curriculum reform in China, teachers have begun to struggle with formulating possible alternatives to traditional direct teaching. I hope my exploration of “*en-teaching*” will contribute to this grand project.

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